

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction

25c



Christmas... 1951

Painted by Maurice Bower

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A
KAMIKAZE PILOT**

by Yukihiisa Suzuki

KINGDOM BY THE SEA

A book-length novel of ranch life

*by Richard Wormser
and Dan Gordon*

Nine short stories: many special features

A Dawn Never to Be Forgotten

LOOK FORWARD! LOOK ABOUT YOU! AND LOOK BACKWARD TOO; FOR LIKE PATRICK HENRY, WE KNOW NO WAY OF JUDGING THE FUTURE BUT BY THE PAST. . . . CONSIDER, THEN, THIS REMARKABLE PICTURE OF PRESIDENT-TO-BE JAMES MONROE DRAWING UP HIS WILL ON ANOTHER DAY OF GREAT TENSION AND DESPERATE ANXIETY:

by HENRY ALONZO MYERS

Who wrote "Are Men Equal?" (Blue Book: July–September 1945)

THE Nicholas H. Noyes Collection in the Cornell Library contains a vivid reminder of the dark hours of war and invasion—a last will and testament written and signed on September 14, 1814, by James Monroe, later fifth President of the United States.

The will begins:

"I, James Monroe, of Albemarle County & State of Virga. well knowing the uncertainty of human life, especially at a period, when, by the predatory & desolating system of warfare carried on by the enemy, the best & most active services of every citizen are due to his country; and being very solicitous to make the best provision in my power for my family, and creditors, make this my last will and testament."

And it ends:

"This instrument made in haste contains the best disposition which I can make, of my property for my family & debts. Made at Washington this 14. of Sept. 1814."

September 14, 1814! On that day James Monroe, Secretary of State of the United States, was also acting as Secretary of War. As far as he knew, the British were advancing unchecked, on land and on the water, sweeping down Lake Champlain in one spearhead of invasion and up the Chesapeake in another, and already aiming a third at Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley. A little over two weeks before, the enemy, after routing the American militia at Bladensburg, had entered Washington and set fire to the Capitol and the President's house, where Dolly Madison, risking capture, had heroically lingered until the

last possible moment in order to save two precious relics, the Stuart portrait of Washington and the engrossed parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence.

Now the Treasury was empty; recruiting in the regular army was at a standstill for lack of money; and voices were heard in New England, threatening secession. In the darkest hour of the Republic since Valley Forge, well might the doubly burdened but resolute Secretary draw up his last will and testament as he planned to carry on the war with all the resources he could muster.

But although Monroe did not know it, the darkest hour had already ended in a dawn never to be forgotten by Americans. He did not know that far to the North on that very day General Macomb was announcing in General Orders to his army the precipitate flight of the British toward Canada—the result of the great American victories at Plattsburg and on Lake Champlain. He did not know that by the end of that day the British, beaten back in their attack on Baltimore, would be in full retreat down the Chesapeake. He could not foresee that Andrew Jackson, who narrowly avoided capture in the darkness before the dawn of that very day, would go on to face the invaders squarely at New Orleans and hurl them back in the bloodiest repulse ever suffered by the British army.

On September 14, 1814, "by the dawn's early light," Francis Scott Key, standing on the deck of the *Minden*, witnessed the failure of the British bombardment of Fort McHenry and wrote the opening stanza of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Readers' Comment

For the Record (A)

As an ardent reader of BLUE BOOK, I want to go on record as being very much disappointed that so much space should be used for the so-called extraordinary novel "Planets in Combat." The newsstands are cluttered with this space trash, and that is where they should be—not in BLUE BOOK.

F. J. Burnell

(B)

"PLANETS IN COMBAT" is one of the finest stories I have ever read, and is one of the best BLUE BOOK has published over the years—and as far as I am concerned, BLUE BOOK has never published a bad or an unreadable story. This is no malarky; two bits comes hard to me; I am a school janitor with two daughters, and I can squeeze a nickel until the buffalo grunts. Good luck to a fine magazine—my favorite.

Fred R. Gardner

(C)

I WOULD like to go on record as saying that BLUE BOOK is the best magazine of its type anywhere: a large number of stories of every variety—all well illustrated. I enjoyed David Cheney's stories "The Athenian Slaves" and "To the World's End" very much. Being a science fiction fan, I am looking forward to the conclusion of Heinlein's "Planets in Combat."

Alexander Fundukis

Statement of the Ownership, Management, and Circulation required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as Amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233)

of BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1, 1951.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, Phillips Wyman, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.; Editor, Donald Kennicott, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Manager, none.

2. The owner is: McCall Corporation, Wilmington, Delaware. Names and addresses of stockholders holding one percent or more of the capital stock of McCall Corporation are: Atwell & Company, c/o United States Trust Company, 45 Wall Street, New York, N. Y.; Oliver B. Capen, c/o Chase National Bank, Personal Trust Division, 11 Broad Street, New York, N. Y.; Hamilton Gibson, c/o First National Bank, Trust Department, Orlando, Florida; Kelly & Company, c/o Guaranty Trust Company, 140 Broadway, New York, N. Y.; Mansell & Company, 43-17 Wall Street, New York, N. Y.; Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane, 70 Pine Street, New York, N. Y.; O'Neil & Company, P. O. Box 28, Wall Street Station, New York, N. Y.; Robert Cade Wilson, c/o Irving Trust Company, Custodian Department, One Wall Street, New York, N. Y.

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Phillips Wyman, Publisher.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 7th day of September, 1951. Frank J. O'Leary, Notary Public for the State of New York, No. 41-8193700. Qual. in Queens Co. Court, filed in: Queens Co. Reg. Office, N. Y. Co. Clks. and N. Y. Co. Reg. Office. Commission Expires March 30, 1952.

BLUE BOOK

December, 1951

MAGAZINE

Vol. 94, No. 2

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Cover Design—Christmas, 1951
Painted by Maurice Bower.

The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, Publisher

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is published each month simultaneously in the United States and Canada by McCall Corporation. Marvin Pierce, President; Lowell Shumway, Vice-President and Circulation Director; Edward Brown, Secretary; J. D. Hartman, Treasurer. Publication and Subscription Offices: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. Executive and Editorial Offices: 230 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. MANUSCRIPTS and ART MATERIAL will be carefully considered but will be received only with the understanding that the publisher and editor shall not be responsible for loss or injury. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: \$2.50 for one year, \$4.00 for two years, \$5.00 for three years in U. S., Canada and all American countries (Add \$1.00 per year for other countries). Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions to our publication office, McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. IF YOU PLAN TO MOVE SOON please notify us four weeks in advance because subscription lists are addressed in advance of publication date and extra postage is charged for forwarding. When sending notice of change of address give old address as well as new, preferably clipping name and old address from last copy received. DECEMBER ISSUE, 1951, VOL. LXXXIV, No. 2. Copyright 1951 by McCall Corporation. Reproduction in any manner in whole or part in English or other languages prohibited. All rights reserved throughout the world. Necessary formalities, including deposit where required, effected in the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Reprinting not permitted except by special authorization. Printed in U.S.A. Entered as second-class matter November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The Outlaw

HE WAS A ROBIN HOOD HERO TO A PAIR OF TWELVE-YEAR-OLD ALABAMA BOYS; AND THEY RACED THE SHERIFF'S POSSE TO WARN HIM.

by WYATT
BLASSINGAME

DURING the first decade of this century the name of Buck Honig was better known in rural sections of Alabama than the name of William Howard Taft. Honig was the last of the great train-robbers, a bandit—and a legend. He was a hero in the way Robin Hood must have been a hero in his own day. He would rob a train or a bank, and disappear into the back country, where he bought protection from the poor, paying for it with the money of the railroads and the banks, which were impersonal and wouldn't miss the money, anyway.

To me (I was about twelve years old then), Honig's name was the symbol of romance, of heroism. People are inclined to say, "A boy's father is his hero," but I wonder how often this is true. Certainly I did not regard my father as a hero. He was past middle age when I was born, and my earliest memories of him are of a tall man with gray hair and thin, bitter lips: a man who rarely spoke to me, and when he did speak, it was about money and the need to make and save it.

He had been a boy when the Civil War began, but his was not the classic story Southern families love to tell, about how the war ruined them. His people were tenant farmers, poorer than the dirt they worked. So he had lost nothing by the war: rather, he

was prepared by birth and raising for the hard times which followed. He was tough, and in times which required toughness, he began to prosper. By the time I was born, he owned several thousand acres east of Montgomery; and near Montgomery itself, he had a hardware and general merchandise store.

The farm didn't amount to much, despite its size. Great tracts of it were swamp land, heavily grown with timber; but there were no main highways or railroads near enough to make the timber worth cutting. There were a few spots fit for cotton or corn or sugar cane, and these were farmed by Negro tenants.

Each summer, from the time I was ten years old, my father sent me to live on the farm. "You've got to learn to work," he said. "A man who don't know how to work won't never be good for anything."

It was an expression I had heard all my life, and I hated it. I hated going to this farm, living with an old Negro named Uncle Charley and without another boy, not even a Negro boy, within two miles.

But before the first summer was half over I had come to love Uncle Charley. He was a small Negro, aged and ageless; he had the gift of story-telling and he infinitely preferred this to plowing or chopping cotton. He



"Uncle Charley's daughter is already dead. I don't have money to waste." But I pulled away from Father, still crying.



knew the woods and the creeks and how to make fishtraps, and how to find a rabbit in its bed, and we spent hours at these things when we were supposed to be in the cotton or sweet potatoes. And gradually I began to lavish on him the affection which is inherent in every child, and which I had never been able to feel for my father.

So when Uncle Charley asked me to borrow money from my father (this was early in my second summer on the farm), I was willing to try, although I knew there was little hope.

Almost every Saturday Father drove out in his buggy—automobiles were still rare, and I doubt one could have reached us over those back-country roads. I was sure the only reason Father came was to check on the

amount of work we had done, or make sure the farm was earning every possible penny; so this week we worked hard, hoping to please him. And he was pleased, and a little surprised, to find us still in the field when he arrived.

"A little more," he said, "you'll have this cotton laid by."

"We been working hard," I said. I looked around for Uncle Charley, but he was mopping his face, retreating under the cover of the great bandana until he reached the sweetgum bush where the waterjug was kept.

I said, "Pa—"

"What is it?"

"I want to borrow a hundred dollars."

He stared at me. "You what?" His head went back, and he laughed, the

short, harsh sound of a man who laughs rarely. "What in tarnation you want with a hundred dollars?"

"I'll pay it back," I said.

"What you want with it?"

"I just need it. I'll pay—"

He said: "If you was going to pay it back with fifty per-cent interest, I wouldn't lend it to you, not knowing what it was for."

I knew pleading wouldn't help.

"It's for Uncle Charley."

"Oh!" Father said. "What does that shiftless scoundrel want with a hundred dollars?"

"It's for his boy—his grandson. Uncle Charley's daughter died up in Memphis, and there's nobody to look after the boy. He's just my age, Pa. And Uncle Charley's got to go up there and get him and bring him down here to live."

"He has?" Father turned and called: "What is all this, Charley?"

Uncle Charley put down the waterjug and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, although he had not taken a drink, and came toward us down the cotton rows. "Yessir, Mr. Watts."

"Ain't there somebody up there can look after that grandson of yours?"

"No sir. It's all the kinfolks he's got now."

Illustrated by
JOHN FULTON



*Under the high moon the Little Bendi
was another world, and in it weird
things called and moved invisibly.*

"Well, you don't need a hundred dollars," Father said. "A boy can get down here on the train for fifteen, twenty dollars at the most."

"Yessir. But—" His eyes shifted toward me.

"He's got to go!" I said. "He's got to go to his daughter's funeral! He ain't seen her in a long time, and—"

"Funeral?" Father said. "You mean they ain't buried her yet?"

"Mr. Sam Harris was passing last evening, and brung the telegram," Uncle Charley said. "She just died."

"She'll be buried by now," Father said. "At least she'll be buried before you could get there."

"But he's got to go!" Uncle Charley and I had talked about it, and I could

understand his desperate need to go and see for himself. "At least he could see the—the place. We'll pay, Pa. We'll—"

Father didn't even listen. He said: "I'll get you a railroad ticket to send the boy, Charley. You can pay me when the crop's in. But I ain't throwing away any hundred dollars for you to spend going traipsing around the country."

"Yessir," Uncle Charley said, and turned away, head down. Because he knew, we both knew, that we were helpless before my father, and that nothing would change him.

I began to cry, and Father turned to me with a baffled, half-angry look. After a moment he put a hand on my shoulder. "Uncle Charley can't do no good up there now, Ben. His daughter's already dead. I don't have

money to waste on that kind of thing."

But I pulled away from him, still crying. For a while he stood there, looking as though he were going to strike me in an effort to make me understand and agree with him, but finally he turned away. And I stared after him, his figure thin and dark-clothed and implacable between the green rows of cotton. And I hated him. . . .

A day and a half later, early Monday morning, I awoke to find Uncle Charley gone and a Negro named Landy Mack sitting on the front steps. I asked: "Where's Uncle Charley?"

"He's gone," Landy Mack said. "You goin' come live with me a few days."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"I don't know. You come on get breakfast at my house."

Landy Mack was holding a small bundle of my clothes, neatly tied. I said: "There ain't nowhere Uncle Charley would go, except to Memphis." And all at once I was feeling a surge of joy, of hope, so sharp it was almost painful. "Where'd Uncle Charley get the money?"

"I don't know nothing 'bout it. I told you that."

"He got it from Pa," I said. "Pa gave it to him after all!"

Landy Mack spat in the dust. "Yo' Pa ain't turning loose a nickel—much less a hundred dollars to help some colored man."

So it was not until Uncle Charley returned from Memphis, bringing his grandson with him, that I knew for sure where he'd got the money. But already I had heard the rumors, the whispers, the name spoken always with a kind of awe: "Honig—Buck Honig the Outlaw—Mr. Buck."

It fitted into the legend. Many times I'd heard how some poor man or woman, white or black, someone in grave need, would receive an envelope containing money, and a sheet of paper with Honig's name scrawled upon it. Once I'd heard my father speak of it, calling it a cheap, gaudy way of buying protection. "He gives away fifty dollars to one man," Father said, "and when folks are through talking, it's a thousand dollars to fifty men. That's why every poor white and Negro in the State is willing to hide him from the law."

"Eventually somebody will turn him in for the reward," the other man had said. "The railroad's put up another five thousand dollars."

"Ahh. . . I'd sure like a chance at it," my father had said.

When Uncle Charley returned and I asked him about the money, he just walked away from me, muttering. It was Jake, his grandson, who told me.

There had been tension between Jake and me at first, like the meeting of two strange dogs, but such feeling doesn't last long between twelve-year-old boys. Within a week we were sworn friends.

So I asked Jake, and he said: "I can't tell you." But I knew he was going to. It was information too huge to keep.

"Come on," I said. "I won't tell nobody."

"You promise?"

"I double promise."

We were fishing, sitting on the creek-bank; Jake looked all around him to make sure there were no hidden witnesses.

"It was Buck Honig."

WE stared at one another. My lips had gone dry, and I had to wet them. "How'd he give it to him? How'd he get the money out here to Uncle Charley?"

"He must have rode up and left it. It was on the kitchen table when Gran'pa woke up."

"You mean—Buck Honig brought it? Then I must have been right there, on the porch—"

I thought of myself sleeping under the dim cloud of mosquito netting, and of Buck Honig riding his horse through the moonlight, leaving the horse at the broken picket fence and coming up the walk, up the steps into the shadow of the porch, the envelope in his hand. Why, if I had been awake, I could have reached out and touched him!

We sat with our fishing lines forgotten in the creek. "Maybe he's hiding out around here now," Jake said. He swallowed. "Might be right up the Little Bendy."

"Maybe," I said. The creek flowed past us, and a mile downstream it joined the Little Bendy. If you turned north there, upstream, you went into a region of great oak and cypress and dark soft land where Uncle Charley said there were bear and wildcat.

Jake and I looked at one another. We looked at the creek flowing off to the south, and its muddy water became gold in the sunlight and the leaves of the willows glittered like diamonds.

"If it warn't for Mr. Buck, I'd be in the jail, or on the poorfarm in Memphis," Jake said.

"You sure would."

Jake took a long breath. "I'd like to thank him for what he done for me."

"I don't reckon many people ever thank Buck Honig for the things he does for 'em."

Jake said: "If sometime the law had a trap and was going to catch him, and I knew 'bout it—"

"Yeah!" I said. "And we knew where his hideout was so we could warn—"

The thing was too big for us to conceive all at once. We sat under the willows and the wild muscadine vines, and watched the golden creek flow past, and dreamed.

We never admitted openly, not even to ourselves, that we were looking for Buck Honig's hideout. But that very afternoon we began to fish farther and farther down the creek. Within a week we were fishing the Little Bendy itself. And gradually we began to learn the windings of that stream and something of the dark forest world around it. A 'coon would stare at us from the shadows, then vanish as we watched. More than once we startled deer from their beds; we saw the tracks of wildcat, and once we found the tracks of a bear, knowing they were bear tracks without knowing how we knew.

Neither Jake nor I ever went into that country without a small thrill of terror—yet despite that (or perhaps because of it), the exploration of the Little Bendy became a passion with us. We pretended to fish, though there were trips when our lines were never wet. We didn't even want

Uncle Charley to go with us: just the two of us in the dark shadows, watching for animals, snakes, and whispering together how Buck Honig would be at home in this wilderness, imagining him: a huge man on a huge horse, materializing violently out of shadow into sunlight, into vision, and plunging across the field of vision to vanish as violently as he had come.

Soon, had it not been for the necessity to work, we would have spent all our waking hours in the woods. But my father came every Saturday, or every other Saturday at the least. He would drive up in front of the house and get out, black-suited, gaunt, his hair gray. He would walk the fields with me, make me show him the work I had done that week—and I grew to hate Saturdays, and to hate the sight of the dust of my father's buggy rising beyond the fields.

THE first week in August, Jake and I found the cache.

Some ancient flood had changed the course of the Little Bendy, leaving a sunken gash through the woods. About halfway up one bank there was a ledge of overhanging rock, and back of this a natural shelter. There was no sign anyone had ever lived



The first week in August, Jake and I found the cache.

here; but carefully wrapped and stored in one corner was a supply of canned food, and two boxes of .44 cartridges.

We knew, of course, these might merely be supplies left by deer hunters against some future trip. Every autumn, Father came into these woods for deer; and other men came too, from Montgomery and neighboring counties. But for Jake and me, the food and the carefully wrapped boxes of cartridges were proof in themselves: Buck Honig had prepared this hide-out for future use.

After that day we rarely went into the woods of the Little Bendy. Perhaps we imagined we would be followed; perhaps it was a dread that if we probed into that wilderness and came to know it too well, we would by our very knowledge deprive it of wildness and of the sanctuary it offered. So we stayed away, fishing the creek again, looking carefully around us before we spoke in whispers.

"You reckon he's ever really stayed here?"

"He's got it fixed so he can use it when he wants it. He'll use it, all right."

And then the question that one of us always asked: "When you think he'll go there?"

And the answer: "After the next time he holds up a train. When he's running again, with the law after him."

So it seems to me now that Jake and I lived the last days of that summer suspended in time, not aware of the passing of days or even living through them really, but only waiting, possessed of some clairvoyant knowledge of what was going to happen.

And August turned into September, and the cotton was tall in the fields, and in another week I would leave the farm and go back to school.

Then in the middle of a week Jake and I came home one evening to find my father and three other men sitting on the porch. "Well," Father said, looking at the string of catfish and perch I carried, "seems like you been working mighty hard today."

"Yessir." I was staring at the other men. Each of them wore a shield pinned to his shirt. In a nearby chair was a pile of holstered pistols, and four rifles leaned against the wall.

"I thought I put him out here to work," Father said, addressing the other men but looking at me. Then: "Ben, this is Sheriff Hackney. These are his deputies, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Miller."

I said: "How do you do, sir." From around the corner of the house Jake was watching, his mouth open and his eyes white in his face.

Father said: "Sheriff Hackney's out here, Ben, because he's got an idea

Buck Honig may be hiding somewhere near. He held up the bank over to Mt. Meigs yesterday, and headed this way."

I tried to keep from trembling, to keep from showing the terrible knowledge I possessed.

Father said: "I told the Sheriff if Honig was anywhere on my land, then I had an idea where it might be. Besides"—there was no humor in his smile—"I wanted to be in on the reward."

"Buck Honig—he wouldn't hide around here," I said. "Not around here."

*The Sheriff was looking at me. "You sure, son?"

"Yessir. I mean—why would he want to hide here?"

"He's got to hide somewhere."

"Yessir. But—"

They were all looking at me. Father said: "You ain't heard the Negroes talking, have you, Ben? Old Charley say anything about Honig?"

"No sir." I couldn't stand there any longer with all of them watching me. "I got to—to go clean these fish."

SOMEHOW I walked until I was around the corner of the house. Then Jake and I were running, past the house, the barn, to where we could crouch in the shadows, glaring at one another.

"They after him!"

"You think you' daddy can find him? You think he knows where that place is?"

"I don't know." We were on our hands and knees, the fish between us. Both of us had our knives out, so if we were seen we could claim we were cleaning the fish, but we had not touched a one. "Even if he don't know the exact spot, they might—"

"We got to warn him," Jake said.

I cut carefully around a catfish head and began to skin it, but my hands shook. "They'll stay here tonight. As soon as they go to sleep—"

"Yeah," Jake said. Neither of us had ever been so afraid. . . .

Inside the house someone had begun to snore. I reached down to the foot of the bed and got my shirt and pants; I pushed back the mosquito netting and stood up. Beyond the porch-edge, moonlight quick-silvered the yard; but beyond the yard, beyond the broken picket fence, the shadows were liquid and inky. Behind me the snoring seemed almost too loud, too regular. I listened a moment, then dived into the moonlight and ran.

Back of the barn I stopped. "Jake?" "Here me."

"Wait a minute." I pulled on my pants and shirt. Then we were away from the barn and in the moonlight again, running.

By daylight the Little Bendy had been a strange and somber country. Under the high moon it was another world; it was a place we had never been and did not know, and in it weird things called and moved invisibly. The darkness was like no darkness we had experienced; it was thick and palpable; it blinded you through a deliberate and vicious will of its own. At times the darkness might have been a solid wall, at times a pit into which you could step and fall forever. But through occasional gaps in the trees moonlight plunged down like a waterfall.

"How far we come?"

"I don't know. But we—we ain't lost, because that's the river."

The river had a dim luminosity. In the shadows it was invisible; yet it seemed to give off a strange and eerie light that hung above the water like a mist. Around an old snag the water would ripple and burn, snag and shadow merging into one fantastic shape, changing into another.

"What's that noise back of us?"

"Ain't nothing. I didn't hear nothing."

"It was something."



But listening, there would be only the wind, the far-off cry of an owl, the croaking of frogs.

We tried to go quietly, and we stumbled and fell, making noises that hurt our ears. We spoke in whispers.

"Ain't this where you caught that big cat?"

"Yeah. At least, I think it is."

"Ought to be close to that gully."

There were flecks of moonlight here, and we moved faster. The sweat streamed off me. Mosquitoes were a cloud about my face; my chest hurt, and I could hear the harsh sound of Jake's breathing.

Then I heard something else. Jake heard it too, and we stopped, staring at one another, staring back of us into the darkness. "What—"

It came again. "Ben—" the voice called. "Ben! You wait where you are. Ben—"

"It's Pa! He's done followed us!"

"Ben—" Father called. His voice faded, but now there was the mutter of other voices.

"The High Sheriff!" Jake whispered. "All them deputies!"

We glared at one another. "The reward money! They'll kill—"

Now we were running, still trying to be silent so the men behind us would not hear, but with the noise of our progress like thunder in our ears. Jake was ahead of me, and he stumbled and fell, and I passed him. The old riverbed opened up ahead, grass-grown and rocky, but without trees, and white under the moon. I turned into it, running hard, knowing the hideout was no more than a hundred yards away. "Honig!" I yelled. "Mr. Buck! The Sheriff—"

My foot hit a rock, and I fell. At the same instant I heard the whipping sound past my ear, saw the flash half-way up the bank a hundred yards ahead. As I hit the ground, rolling, I heard the crack of the rifle. Jake fell over me.

I STARTED to rise, not quite realizing what had happened. The bullet missed my head by inches; I went flat.

"Ben!" Jake cried. "Ben! You—"

"He missed." I could scarcely get the words out of my throat. "You—"

"Naw. But Mr. Honig, he—he thinks we's the Sheriff!"

"Ben!" It was my father's voice, almost a scream now. Turning my head, I saw him burst from the darkness of the trees into moonlight, running hard. The rifle was in his hand; and even then, even when I saw him plunging through the open moonlight toward the spot where Jake and I lay in the grass, I thought he was after Honig, thought dully: *"He's done outrun the Sheriff and all the deputies, trying to get there first, get the reward money. . . ."*

This time I did not see the flash of the rifle; I saw Father stagger, saw his own gun drop from his hand. But he did not fall. He came on, knee-deep in the grass, reeling. "Ben—" he called.

Again I heard the quick flat sound of Honig's rifle. I saw Father shudder; he turned half around, and fell.

From the trees back of us came a crash of gunfire. The Sheriff and both deputies were firing at the flash of Honig's rifle.

The Sheriff loomed mountain-big against the sky. Jake and I got to

hands and knees, looking up at him. He asked: "You boys all right?"

"Yessir. Pa—"

"Over here," the Sheriff said.

Pa lay on his back, the moonlight shining in his face as he looked at me.

"You all right, Ben?"

"Yes sir."

"He didn't hit you? Not at all?"

"No sir."

"I saw you fall. I was afraid—"

He stopped. He closed his eyes and lay there, frowning a little. "Anyway," he said slowly, "I'm glad you ain't hurt."

I began to cry then. Because I think I understood then, by instinct rather than reason, even before the Sheriff told me, going back through the woods, following the crude litter the deputies were carrying: "You ain't much good as a liar, boy. But your Pa said if you did know where Honig was, you'd never tell us, not after what Honig did for that little buddy of yours. So we just waited and followed you. Only," the Sheriff said, "the deeper we got in these woods, the less your Pa thought about that reward and the more he thought about what might happen to you."

"Until then, I guess, he'd been thinking so much about that money it didn't occur to him you might get hurt. I reckon it didn't occur to any of us. We thought we could stay close enough so's to stop you, once we had an idea where Honig was. But we lost you, and then there wasn't no holding your Pa any more. He began to yell for you like a crazy man. I never saw a man forget five thousand dollars in such a hurry." The Sheriff paused. "He even forgot a bullet could kill him as easy as it could you."

We had come out into the open. In the moonlight I could see Father's gray hair. His face was gray too now, and gaunt and ugly.

I caught the Sheriff's sleeve and jerked at it. "He ain't going to die!" I said. "He won't die!" I was crying again now, knowing for the first time what my father had known always: the terrible frustration of love for which there can be no expression.

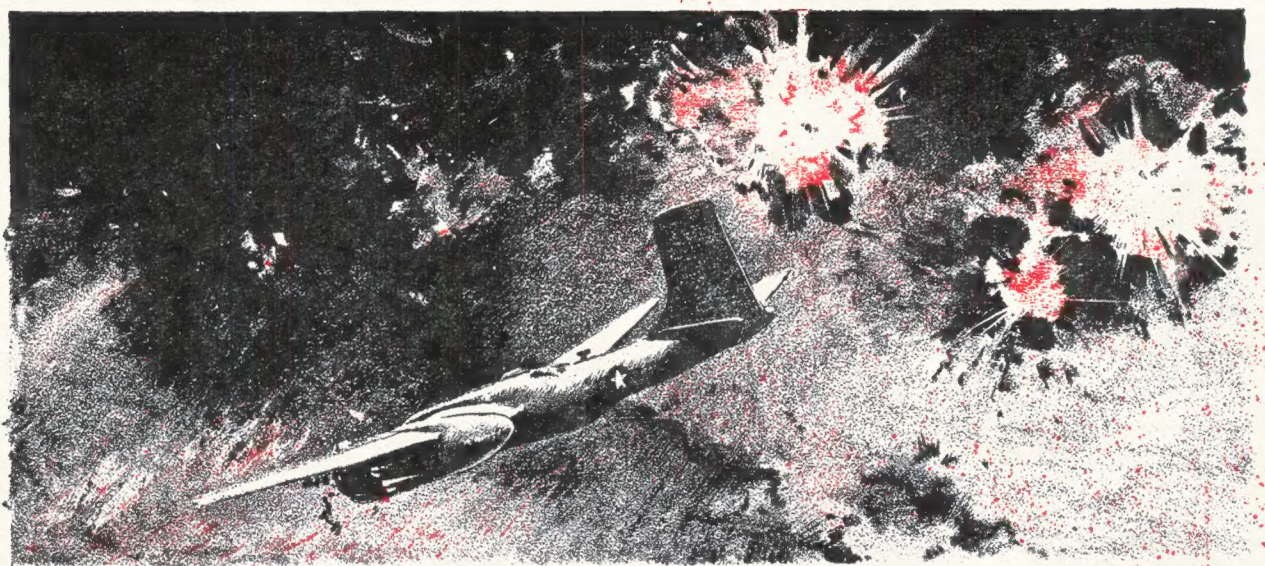
"He ain't going to die!" I said. "I won't let him! I won't let him!"

And he did not die, though for a while I was the only one who believed he would not. He lived to say to me years later, when we were talking about it: "You know, Ben, the way things worked out between me and you, I'm kind of glad Honig got away that night. I'm almost glad I didn't get that money."

He wasn't joking; he wasn't the kind to joke. And I understood. Because the reward the two of us got that night on Little Bendy was worth more than money.



I thought he was after Honig. "He's done outrun the Sheriff, trying to get there first, get the reward money."



NIGHT INTRUDER

OUR COMBAT ARTIST HERE RECORDS WITH HIS OWN ILLUSTRATIONS A NIGHT BOMBING STRIKE IN KOREA. "NEVER," HE COMMENTS, "HAVE I FLOWN WITH SO FEW WHO WOULD DO SO MUCH TO SO MANY."

by HAMILTON GREENE

ACTUALLY there's no change in the rhythmic beat of engines when a B-26 bores north from the 38th parallel and crosses the bomb line. It just seems that there is. One minute the shrouded land below is comforting and friendly. The next minute, it's sinister and enemy. The clutching dark, the swirling scud at the wing roots, touched with color by the licking flames of the cowl exhaust, remain the same. But when you cross Line Easy and go roaring out over the enemy, the special quality of a night strike hits you for the first time.

It's the land that's different. No light shows from the enemy side, but you know that the enemy is there—that he can hear you, and that he would dearly love to kill you deadlier than a herring. Not that you can blame him. At the time I'm speaking of, we were carrying four tons of incendiary frag clusters in our bays, and we mounted fourteen .50-caliber machine guns belted with eight hundred rounds each, and none of this was being freighted north in a spirit of brotherly love.

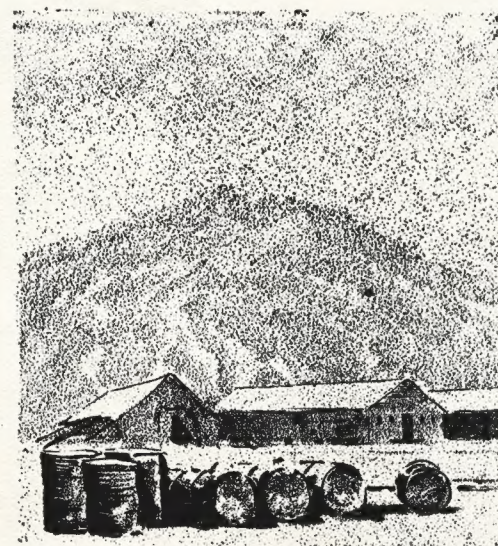
Enemy territory always has prickled the back of my neck, and I suppose it always will. But on a night mission the darkness not only does something to the ground. It also does something

to the air, by virtue of a subtle but constant restatement of something you already know—that you are absolutely alone. Somewhere miles out in front of us other ships were boring in on a similar course, and far behind us came still others. But we were strung out at intervals of five minutes' flying time. Which to us, "logging through space at more than two hundred m.p.h., meant we might as well have been a million miles apart.

No wing men here, rocking gently just outside the plexiglas. No sunlight dancing from the silver skins of the high right, the low left, and tail-end Charley. No staggered ranks of friendly echelons, stacked in for comfort, to answer the demanding love that misery has for company. No, not here. The Night Intruder mission is flown solo. Each pilot is his own lead ship. In each right seat, combined in one agile set of brains, is lead navigator and lead bombardier. Each contest with the Chinaman is purely individual, and the subsequent triumph—or the death—is peculiarly your own.

I was flying this night in the "idiot" seat, obviously so called from its sole function of seating what spare personnel would wish to crowd the cockpit of a B-26 in combat. Lt. Paul Tryko of Pittsburgh, Pa., navigator and bom-

bardier, sat directly in front of me. Major Gilbert Nevling, another Pennsylvania boy from around Altoona, sat to the left of him at the pilot's wheel. Sgt. Harry Baumgartner was back in the waist. He was the gunner to handle either turret or tail guns, and I suppose he was hoping he would not have much to do. These three men were the sum total of the crew; yet we carried as much destruction with us as the B-17 or the B-24 did in the old days.



"Never," I reflected, "have I flown with so few who would do so much to so many."

Moreover, although I was something of an old hand in bombers, I had never before flown a night sortie of any kind. We roared on course through the empty black, with only the faint glow of illuminated dials to light my fumbling efforts with a cigarette and I considered this fact, and its natural corollary: "Why this night stuff, anyhow?"

THE answer was simple. The peace talks at Kaesong had quieted the front, but the Chinks were working like mad to reinforce their front-line strength. They were running big truck convoys down from the Manchurian border, and whether for political or tactical reasons, the build-up was disquieting to G.H.Q. This situation had obviously called for characteristic treatment from the Air Force. Accordingly, the big 29's had been commissioned to plaster the broad build-up areas in the north, while fighters of all kinds, Army, Navy, Marine—jet and reciprocal, shore-based and ship-based—had torn into the convoys themselves. The Chinks, hurting, had decided to pull off the road and hole up under camouflage during the daylight hours. But they poured down the roads by night. "Firefly" ships might still drop flares, and beneath their weird brilliance the fighters still could work the enemy to some degree. But the best answer to catching the Chinaman abroad in the dark, lay in the B-26. These ships not only had sufficient speed, good range and could carry a heavy bomb load, but they had at hand the developed radar techniques of blind navigation and bombing control necessary to operation in absolute darkness.

I say "had them at hand," but that hardly conveys the fact that for a solid year these night procedures had been

carefully and thoroughly worked out by many clever and hard-working men in the Third Light Bomb Wing. These men had started looking over the night problem from the very moment the first Commie had set foot across the disputed parallel. They had been based in Japan from the start, and during that first hectic summer when the North gooks were shoving us toward the sea, the Third had been forced to operate both by day and by night.

With the coming of October, the 452nd Bomb Wing, out of Los Angeles, had arrived in Japan bag and baggage, and had set up shop next door to the Third. From that time on, the 452nd had taken over the day load, and the Third had devoted themselves exclusively to night flying. The two wings had done a mess of missions. They'd flown around the clock. At one time, between them, they'd put a sortie in the air for every six minutes of a single twenty-four-hour period. And in the meantime the Third had been logging a wealth of valuable night experience. By the time the 452nd was ready to move to Korea, the Third had sent up a total of more than eight thousand night sorties.

The 452nd Bomb Wing came from Japan to Korea in early May, at about the time the Chinks had decided to avoid the roads during daylight. Knowing that he too would have to operate at night, Lt. Col. John Herrington, C. O. of the 452nd Bomb Group, had brought with him from Third Wing a nucleus of night problem specialists, among them Charley Wright, the S-3, who probably knew as much about the nocturnal operational picture as any man around. With Charley, night procedure had become something of a career in itself. So when Herrington had sent his boys off in the dark for the first time on June 10th, they had had a

rather clear notion of just what they were doing.

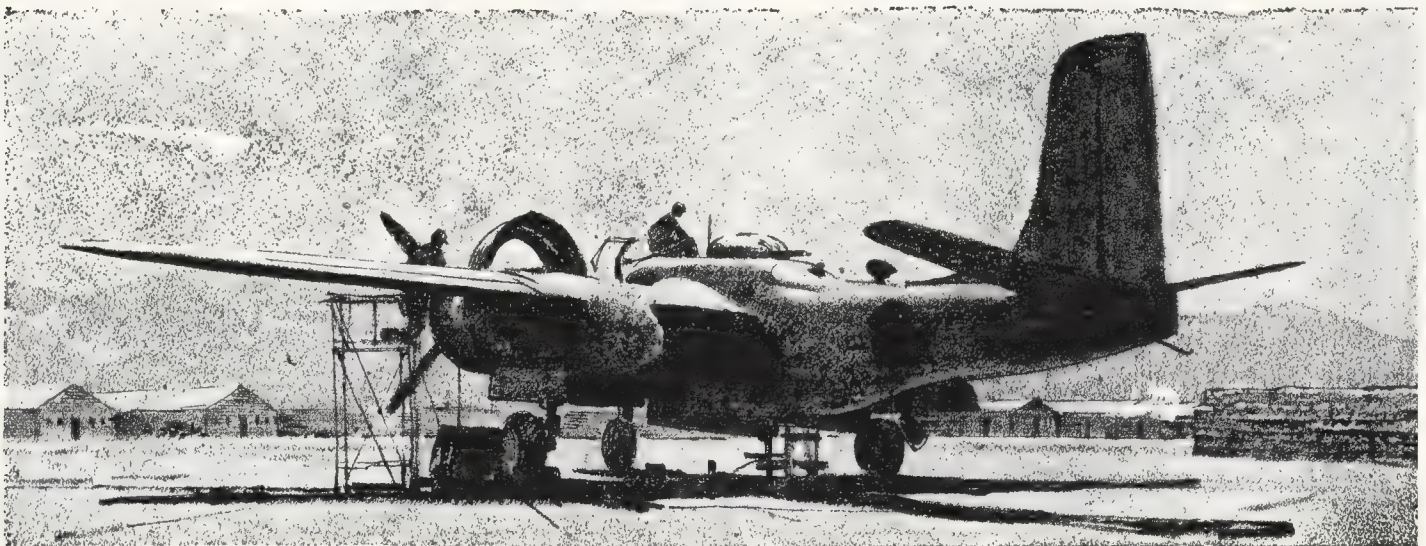
When I'd first arrived at the 452nd base, I'd talked with Herrington and had found him to be an amusing guy with a wonderful humor, whose boys thought he hung the moon and set the stars. I'd asked him how the boys were making out in their comparatively new rôle as night operators.

"We're doing all right," he'd told me. "In July alone we fixed 432 Chink trucks so they won't run any more—definitely destroyed." He rattled off other figures (as much as a drawling Texan can rattle off anything.) Several dozen supply areas made useless, 871 trucks damaged, so many trains, God knows how many gun emplacements—not to say troop areas and buildings. "We've done a mess of damage," he said. "Some fellow has figured out that from machine guns alone the belted .50-caliber ammo we've expended in North Korea would stretch for eighteen miles, so we must have hit something! Actually we take pictures of what we do so we aren't just guessing at results." (I had known better than to ask him how he took pictures in the dark. The stuff they work with nowadays makes Buck Rogers seem quite underprivileged.)

"But we pay for what we get," the Colonel had added. "We lose men, and it's not only the Chinks that get them. This is a game where you can kill yourself easier than have the Chinaman do it."

As Herrington was speaking, I'd looked across the field at ships visible up and down the line with bashed-in noses and fantastic props. "Overshot," Herrington had said. "That's easy to do when you come in at night after a long cold ride up north. I'm thinking of putting up a big butterfly net at the far end of this strip."

I could see that the special quality of darkness might impose rather spe-



cial problems. It's hard enough to fly combat by day in normal country, but consider the target terrain of Korea, and you may sense how greatly the difficulties have been compounded. Korea is like a vast flat table-top, practically at sea level, but studded with a million ridges and peaks rising abruptly from the valley floor. What hills there are, are way, way up. What flat land there is, is way, way down. Think of a bunch of ice-cream cones upside down on a platter, remembering that the targets were down on the platter between the cones. Without tried and tested operational procedures, negotiating these targets by night would have splattered the Air Force over acres on acres of Korean real estate.

INSTRUMENT training here became something for the book. Outside of landings, all of which were controlled blind by GCA, the mere business of finding your target and hitting it without dividing yourself in sections, became as esoteric as science fiction. These pilots had to have more on the ball, technologically, than the medium pilots I used to know in the old days. As for the ship itself, those 26's sent out to function under the fancier methods of bomb control had waist compartments more nearly suggestive of space ships rigged for interplanetary recon.

Just why they flew these night jobs using a B-26 in the first place, was something I could not, at first, quite grasp. The airplane had been designed and built by Douglas a great many years ago. Or, wait a minute. Was it so very many? Come to think of it, I could remember clearly the first time I'd ever seen one. That was a million years ago during that other war—early summer of '44. It had been parked under wraps with an armed guard around it, no less, on a remote

hardstand of the flying field at Great Dunbow, in England. At the time I was sitting in on World War II with Joe Kelly's Marauders, who were then using the old Martin B-26. This new ship under the tarpaulin was just an experimental job then. It was called the "Invader" and in those days they designated it the A-26. It was very hush-hush. They wouldn't even let me look at it.

BUT time had marched on. Standing with Herrington on the taxi strip, I had looked down a long line of these same graceful Invaders while arming trucks had trundled about them loading bombs of all varieties. Mechanics had swarmed over the wings and cockpits, and crouched beneath the open doors of the bomb bays. The old Martin B-26 having been long dead, the call the Invader the B-26 now. Nice looking, nice flying. But history repeating itself, these again were too old—slow, outmoded. Like the old Martin its numerical namesake, they don't even make them any more.

Herrington must have been following my line of thought, for he had said: "We wouldn't be using these now except that they're absolutely all we have. The Johnson régime made Korea a poor man's war, to begin with. A lot of good planes like the 47's and 61's were sold off or given away. But fortunately we had put these crates out with some National Guard outfits; and when the Korea business broke, we begged them back. But let me tell you, in case you're getting me wrong, they're not bad crates at all. You remember they used to call the old Martin 'the flying prostitute?' " (Sure, I'd remembered the gag. It was because they had practically no visible means of support.) "Well," said Herrington, "this one is still a prostitute, but she's also kind of a lady."

Yes, she had indeed been a good ship, and I let my mind run over some of the stuff I'd heard about her since the Korean War began.

At first they'd dropped bombs from medium altitude, then they'd made like fighters and strafed from the deck. They'd done a great job of harassing the Chinks during the big Hamhung retreat from the north last winter. All during the days of the yo-yo war while the UN and the Commies chased each other up and down the peninsula, the B-26's flew in close tactical support, doing what a light aircraft is designed to do. They busted bridges with H.E., scattered troop concentrations with frag clusters, destroyed supply dumps with napalm. They used to go in low level and in formation. Right down on the deck! They'd pass and drop, wheel around and pass again with empty bays and wing racks, but with nose and wing guns raising hell. By the third pass, every Chinaman in the county would have their range and promptly load the air with more heavy metal than a Great Lakes ore barge.

Still, the 26's could lay it on with wonderful precision. A guy could skid a napalm bomb in one door of a supply shed and out the other. His guns, all fourteen of them, could sweep straight up a road like a cloud of dust; then he'd peel away into evasive action and shag the hell out of there. Hop the thatched roofs and fly around trees and not wait for company. They'd get together later. Wonderful stuff, but expensive. They'd lost a lot of good guys that way. So the 26's went back up to medium level, about eleven thousand to thirteen thousand, and things got somewhat safer but not so precise.

Then came the peace talks, the consequent lull at the front and the hectic efforts of the Chinks to build up their front-line strength. The night-running truck convoys had suddenly become Enemy Number One. So here was the B-26 with a new assignment.

AND here also was where I'd come in. It was why, on the night of which I'm speaking, I'd found myself doubled up in the cockpit of one with Nevling and Tryko, who with Baumgartner in the waist, were splitting the chill air with thunderous power on a double mission quite typical of the times. We were to drop our clusters on a target near Pyongyang, then probe an adjacent area looking for trucks, using our own judgment as to what to do with them when we found them. We were out to hit the Chinaman in the dark—hit him with bombs and hit him with bullets. What did they call this stuff again? Oh, yes. Night Intruder.





The old Martin B-26 having been long dead, they call the Invader the B-26 now.



"Please, Chinamen, die quickly," I said without sound. "I don't like you, but die quickly."

I thought of July and the hours of darkness when I'd heard these planes go over the lines as I lay in dismal wetness on the high places of our front. From a hole in a hill, studded with lurking Chinamen, this airplane had sounded reassuring, even safe and secure. Well, I suppose everything is relative. But here, north

of the bomb line and freighted with some of the master mechanisms of murder, I found my responses somewhat dissimilar.

"WHAT am I doing here?" I had asked myself, and was immediately annoyed by my own question. I always think that on one of these things,

yet I knew damn well why I was there. I gave myself the formula answer: "These guys are doing an important job. You are here to see what cooks." Then, thinking of the jellied gasoline in our bomb clusters, I wished I hadn't put it quite that way. Well—what was the difference? War isn't nice, no matter how you look at it.

I eased my 'chute straps, and the pinch of my headset, and watched the necklace of coral flames dance back from the slotted engine louvres. I watched Gil Nevling's skillful hands on the wheel, and noted the tension of complete absorption in Paul Tryko's shoulders as he bent over the job on his lap-board, figuring and checking—calling course and checking again. Gil passed me a cigarette. Again I was conscious of metallic rasping syllables from Paul to Gil, on the intercom. "Over Line Easy. Hold on three three zero—in five minutes go on heading two nine one—over."

Oh, how different when you're going in alone! How different from following the assigned slot in a tight formation and letting the lead ship bring you in over target. I thought of many medium missions in the old old war, and thought again: "The tune may change but the lyrics remain the same. Kill and be killed. Kill and be killed. But this time it's all by yourself."

We were bearing west, heading for the I. P., our Initial Point, when the night began to change in character. Long trails of gray cloud-bank came drifting in below us, gradually wrapping the land in a wadded woolly blanket. I roughly figured course and time and knew that we were somewhere south of Pyongyang, or Ping Pong, as we sometimes called the capital of North Korea.

OFF to our right, some dozen miles away, the sky suddenly leaped into brilliance. A chandelier of glittering flares swung high over the earth, and I knew that "Fire Fly" was giving visibility to Marine Corsair pilots, working the deck beneath it. Gil leaned back, flipped the radio switch at my elbow to VHF, and with an abrupt snarl, the Corsair pilots came into the phones with calls, instructions and colorful profanity. They were after targets under the flare area, and were trying to find their way down through the scattered cloud-cover.

"Zero Five One, Sugar, Can't see those x x x from here—still looking for a hole. There's one I think—no, the x x x hole has gone and closed over. Over."

"Zero Five One Sugar. This is Sedative. Try to the east a little. I see you close to clutch oboe king item uncle unclutch. Over."

"Sedative that damn carpet is solid like a tent over there. Holes don't last long tonight. Over."

"Okay Zero Five One Sugar. Don't try unless you want to win this war single-handed. Over."

"Wait up a minute, Sedative. There's one hole coming up—going in now. See you later. Out."

Okay, Marines. Give 'em hell!

We kept tooling along in the thickening fog on a course of two nine one, and Gil flipped us back to intercom. "What's the name of this crate?" I asked Gil, for no particular reason.

"Hasn't got a name now. Lost it when the nose got painted over. But we'll think one up and paint it on. What she really needs, though, is a good nude. Can you paint a good juicy nude on her?"

There's a fine job for a war artist. Painting nudes on B-26's. Well, why not?

SUDDENLY I became conscious of luminous streaks weaving an eerie pattern far below us, and for a moment I thought of the phosphorescent glow of breaking surf in tropical waters. Could this be the west coast line of Korea? Oh, hell, no. Not at this altitude. Then I realized it must be the glare of fire bombs dropped by a flight ahead of us, and reflected upward in weird distortion by the shifting strata of mist below us. This whole area was getting a pasting. Individual flights perhaps; but put together, it had the effect of a concentration in mass. And we had our own two cents to put in, as well.

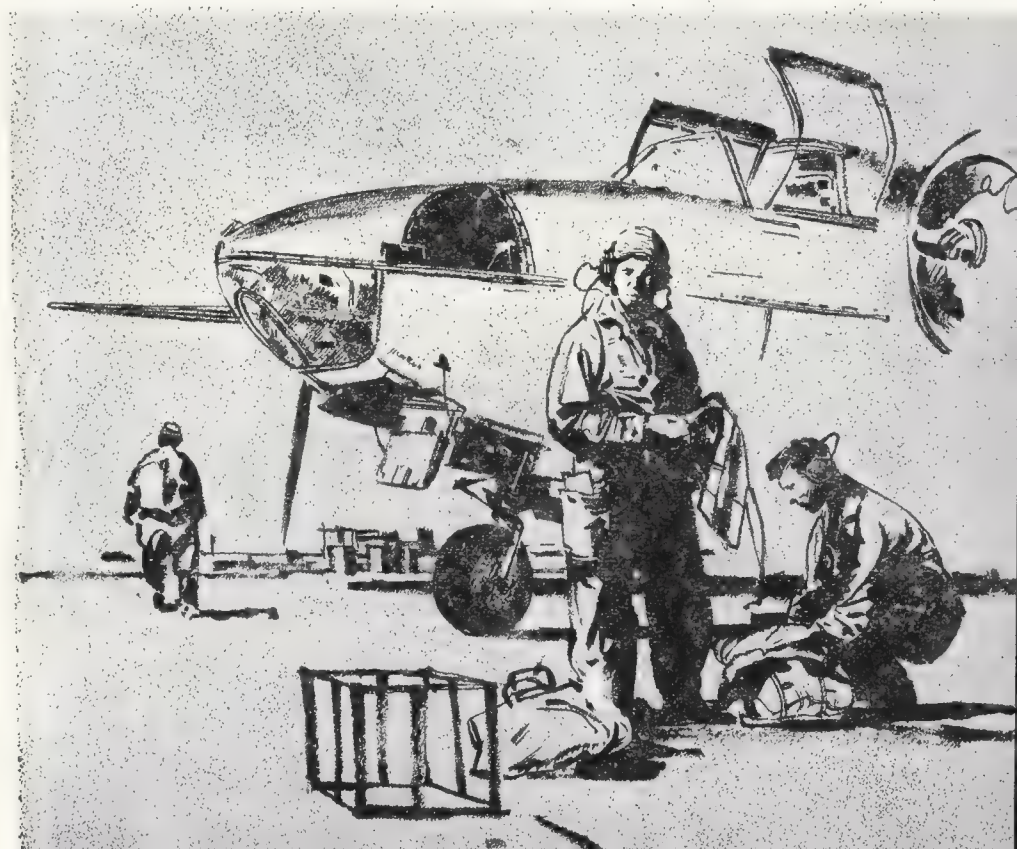
We were almost at the I. P. by then, and Paul and Gil were getting busy with each other, working out the details of our particular drop. The heavy overcast, in the end, was what determined how we did it.

They used three methods of bombing control on these missions, and before each pilot took off from base, he knew which one he was going to use. Two of these methods were very, very security. They differed widely in ap-

plication of principle, but both made use of known radar and radio techniques whose code names you are probably familiar with. However, when I'd asked about these methods, I got about as far as I would have selling the *Daily Worker* in Ridgway's Headquarters. One of these procedures was by far the better. The control was so precise that you could drop from eleven thousand feet and hit with a maximum error of fifty feet! Had we unlimited facilities for this sort of electronic hocus-pocus, every ship in the air would have used it. But as it was, our equipment was not unlimited. Moreover, the sky, this night, was full of 26's all intent on killing Chinamen. So some of us had been briefed to use the secondary radar technique, and others, like us, had been briefed to bomb visually—the conventional navigational approach with use of bombsight. Even at night with no overcast, this method is still quite reliable. However, as Weather Briefing had warned us might be the case, we had below us a 7/10 cloud cover, so we would drop on ETA or estimated time of arrival. This involves merely the simple arithmetical principle of starting from A and flying a specific heading for just so long in order to reach B.

Well, we had an area target for our incendiaries, and Paul could figure an ETA as well as the next man. So that was the pitch. In on ETA from the I. P. And how did we know when we were exactly on the I. P.? The little man with the crystal ball told us so.

The compass started swinging, and my eyes followed the numbers as the gently rolling sphere swam to a stop on



zero three zero. That was just about due north, and visualizing the briefing map, I knew we were headed in on the target run. Paul's hands moved, and there was a quick pickup of noise in the cockpit. Cold air lashed at my ankles, and I knew the bomb-bay doors had opened. Air speed flicked at a constant 200. Paul was hunched over again watching the time check, second by second.

I PEERED vainly at the flying fog and wondered: "What in hell is down there anyway? Can these guys really hit anything?" Gil's right hand was on the stick, his thumb on the bomb release, and Paul's left hand was held ready to slap Gil's leg. Then Gil snapped his mike switch. "If we have to go out," he told me, "the whole cockpit cover flies right off. Stand on the seat and climb out on top, then dive down over the back of the wing. Either side. Count ten."

There wasn't much I could say to that except, "Roger." Then it was only a moment before I saw Paul's hand flick over, slapping the leg of Gil's coveralls. Gil punched his thumb, and the bombs were away.

Even if it had been daylight, from where I sat I couldn't have seen the bombs. But I'd seen them often enough. I could visualize them, without strain. They would be hanging momentarily in invisible suspension just under the open bay. Then they'd arc—gently at first, losing forward speed. Arming vanes would be spinning like mad, then down they'd go, holding their box formation, four above, four below. Down—down—down. The bands would fly off, and the clusters scatter like peas from a burst pod.

Gil brought the wing up, and we banked to port, eyes straining through the plexiglas. A wait of a few seconds only. Then away they blew in a long staggered line of crimson flashes,

now roiling together in a punctuated yellow smear. Quick! What was it? Coney Island at night! That was it. The phones opened up, and I could hear Paul's voice, passive with the nonchalance of familiarity. "Sure are pretty fires," he was saying, but other ideas, less esthetic, were crowding my consciousness. "Please, Chinamen, die quickly," I said without sound. "I don't like you, but die quickly." The bomb-bay doors ground shut.

Gil had been anxious to watch, and he'd rolled us over a little too far. He compensated now with a great twisting dive to starboard. This was certainly no place to tarry. The Chink guns could put up fire around here which Briefing, without amplification, had specified simply as "intense and accurate." Other flights had gone in before us to blanket those guns, but whether or not they had been successful was not our wish to determine. We wove out of the target area like a whirling dervish, and by the feel of the G's I was glad I couldn't see the horizon. My airsick pills were at home.

FOR some minutes we rocked and bumped through the turbulent cloud layers, seeking medium altitude. Even without the needle to look at, I would have known we were climbing, by the cold. We were on a southeast heading, about one two zero, but we weren't heading for home. "Hell, no," I heard myself saying, "we have other fish to fry." And for the second time that night I wished I didn't talk so much.

Gradually we sailed out into smooth air and the forbidding land unfolded below us once again. But as I looked down, I noted that it was no longer a solid unbroken carpet of black. I could see little winking lights down there, in isolated groups. Not lamps certainly. Trucks perhaps. Convoys? No. Those lights winked in a strangely familiar way. Oh, of course. They

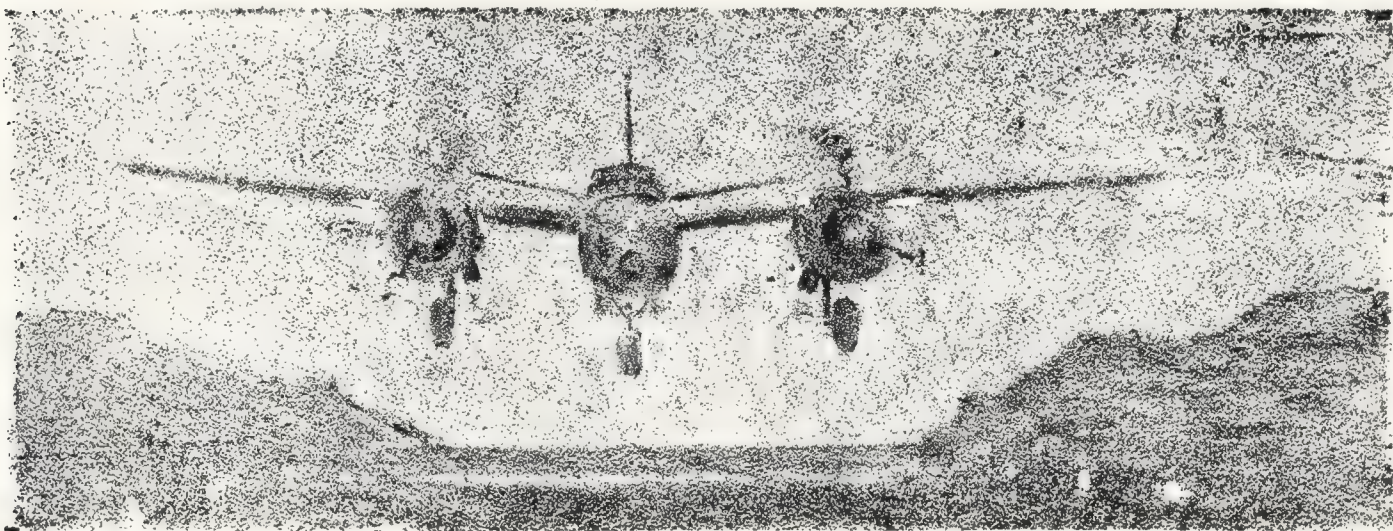
were machine guns. Chink machine guns searching us out. Gil reached overhead to flip the switches which changed the synchronization of his props. I'd heard about that. It would snarl up the engine beat and throw the Chink's Sonar range prediction into a cocked hat.

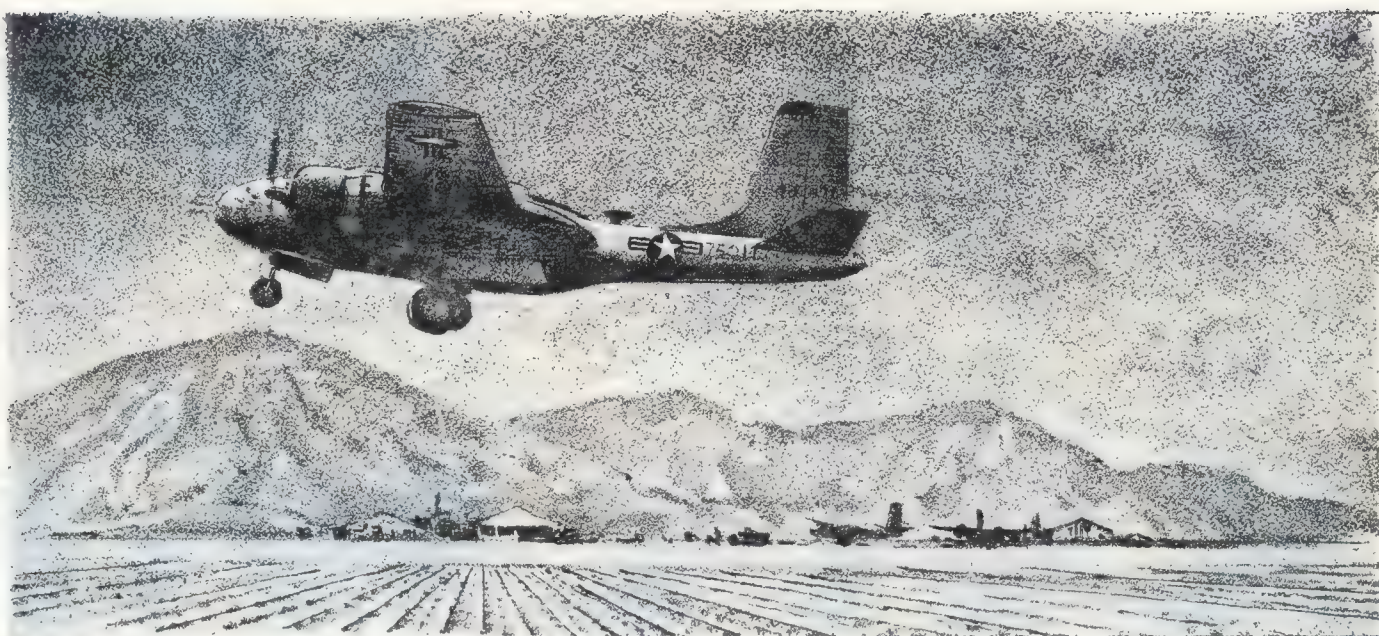
Had we but known it, however, small-arms fire was for us the least sweat of the moment. For some minutes now, Harry Baumgartner, back in the waist, had been frantically trying to raise Gil on the intercom. He was having no luck whatever. His head set was O.K. but his throat mike was dead. What he wanted to tell us was that a Chinese battery was tracking us from the rear with very creditable radar-predicted flak. One of those "intense and accurate," no doubt. He'd watched the splashing red bursts creep up on our tail with a steadily decreasing degree of error, but up in the cockpit, we were blind to our rear and not even aware of it.

First indication to us was a great rocking blast overhead that threw slivers of light dancing from the wing skin. Black smears dotted the plexiglas at Gil's left ear. That's all we needed.

Whoom—away we went! Gil dived her down and right—up and left—down and right again. He cracked his switches again, yanked his wheel now right, now left, and in a minute or two we had left the glaring bursts still splattering the sky, with looping orange baseballs—but well to the rear. Really rather beautiful to look at, as some Italian in Ethiopia had once observed. From a distance, that is.

But now where were we? Nobody knew and right then nobody particularly cared. Gil and Paul had their eyes glued on the terrain once more, and I knew they were looking for lights—the telltale lights of a truck's cat's eyes—a momentary headlight perhaps.





We were well east of Ping Pong then, but we knew damn well the Chink truck convoys were down there, creeping through the passes that twist along the valley floor between the threatening peaks. Those jokers! Here we're talking peace like mad, in Kaesong, while down below the roads were choking with armed build-up in the making. Not one truckload down there could mean anything but grief to the guys on our side.

I don't know when Gil saw the first faint indication. I saw nothing myself, but I knew as we swung in a great arc and began letting down with some velocity—that he was lining up on something. Then I did see it. A shimmering little pinpoint of light in the great black expanse ahead and below. Another one farther back. Well, that would be it. "Hang on." I thought. "Here's phase B of tonight's dirty work at the Crossroads. Pucker up and look sharp. This is the part they call armed reconnaissance."

Gil tipped the nose down, talking to Paul at the same time. "Call off the altitude. There's a good fellow!"

(Sure, but where the hell are the mountains. I sure hope these guys know.)

Down we went with singing props, while the air-speed climbed, reaching for the peg. The altimeter needles unwound like a busted clock and Paul called off the numbers as fast as it takes you to read it. "Eight thousand, seven, five hundred, seven thousand, six, five hundred, five thousand, four, five hundred . . ."

(Hell's bells, you guys, there's hills out here! Don't go getting brave now.)

The nose suddenly came alive, and the cockpit quivered crazily. Eight nose-guns and six wing guns roared

in unison, with more flame and noise than I thought possible.

(Look out, guys. You're still going down. My God—we must be on the deck. Hey!)

Then Paul's numbers came slower. The G's gave a sickening grab at my "breetches" and for three counts the called altitude stayed constant. Then we were up a little. Then a little more—and gradually my liver crawled back into place.

I looked to the right and to the left. There were big shapes right out there cutting sharp black silhouettes against the night sky—and by all that's sacred and just for the record, what were they?

(Don't look now—but you know damn well what they are. Those are *mike oboe uncle nan tare able it'em nan sugar*. Mountains, bud.)

Ho for the jolly old Air Force! Ho for the spirit of Arch Whitehouse and all the eager young beavers with a wholesome distaste for Chink truck drivers. But Holy Moses! Let's not do it again. At least not again for a while.

But I was wrong. We did it again three times.

Two hours later we were on the homestretch. It had been no sweat for Paul to pick up his course again. He'd simply subtracted so many minutes from his ETA to allow for all that horsing around with the Chinamen, and then he'd had Gil fly a steady heading southeast until the guy at K-whoozis could orient us on his crystal ball.

Reheaded, we were within the control of the instrument landing system and Gil was being talked in. Simple, but damned fascinating. We turned in from the off-shore leg with Ground Control droning on—"I have you in

my glide path—up a hundred—bear two seven zero—steady on—let down at five hundred feet per minute—you're O.K.—O.K."

The boundary lights blinked at us over the water, and I could see we were well lined up. The water came up to meet us and I thought briefly of the man who had been coming in last night and had almost hit the bridge off to the left. "But that won't be for us. We're in. Good old Gil. He knows his stuff."

I heard the landing gear come down with a faint whine.

I UNBUCKLED the leg straps on my chute harness and took up on the seat belt. "Pretty good ride," I thought. "Probably we've added somewhat to Mao's worries, one way or another." I unplugged my phone jacks. The shore line slid under us.

"Wonder who I'll get a smile from at the Red Cross coffee booth tonight," I thought further. "Corrinne Smith? Mitzi Van Vechten? There's a nice girl for you." But the smile I really wanted, of course, was some twelve thousand miles away. The boundary lights threw dancing streaks on the wet steel mat sections, and my thoughts ran on! "Hell, I know I don't drink hardly at all, but you know what I think. When we get to interrogation, I think I'll have just one with these guys. They're very good guys. One to salute them with. Just one."

The landing lights leaped from the wings. With a faint metallic jar, the wheels touched and we raced swiftly and smoothly up the long steel strip, for home. I closed my eyes and leaned well back. And for a long, long time I believe I thought of nothing—absolutely nothing whatever at all.

Manhattan Interlude

THEY PLOTTED TO SET OFF WORLD WAR III BY ASSASSINATING THE RUSSIAN DELEGATE TO THE UNITED NATIONS.

by ARTHUR GORDON

THE nightmare began for Harry Clarke at precisely three fifty-five Eastern Standard Time. He did not know it was a nightmare then, but he did know the exact time. Not knowing it had caused him, ten minutes earlier, to miss the train that would have taken him back to Maddox, and he had learned to his dismay that there would be no other train until after midnight.

So he stood morosely under the big clock in the Pennsylvania Station, set the wrist-watch that had betrayed him by being slow, wound it, and to make sure it was functioning raised it to his left ear.

As he did so, the girl came out of nowhere and said to him in a low voice: "I told you butter wouldn't suit the works."

Harry stared at her for a moment. Then, being fairly familiar with English classics—and also at a loss for any other reply—he gave her the answer which the *March Hare* had offered when confronted with the same remark in the *Mad Hatter's* Tea-party. "It was the *best* butter!"

The girl said, without any change of inflection: "Seven o'clock. Six two four west fifteen." She glanced once at the big clock above them. "You're five minutes early," she said sharply. "After this, be on time."

She turned away quickly. Harry watched her being swallowed up in the crowd. "Hey!" he called, but she did not even look back.

Being a methodical young man, he took out his fountain pen and on the back of an envelope wrote the address she had given him. He stood still for a moment, thinking. Then he sauntered over to a news-stand, bought a paper, opened it and pretended to read. But actually he was watching the clock and the area under it which he had just vacated.

At four o'clock precisely a squarish, swarthy man wearing a dark suit stopped under the clock, consulted his

wrist-watch, set it, wound it, held it to his left ear.

Harry folded the paper and stepped forward. He said, under his breath: "I told you butter wouldn't suit the works."

"It was the *best* butter!" The man spoke with some kind of accent.

Harry said succinctly: "Get out of town. They're wise to us!"

He caught the sudden fear in the dark eyes as he wheeled away. He moved off through the crowd in a direct line, half expecting the man to follow him, to ask questions, to demand an explanation. But when he looked back, the man was gone.

"BUT I tell you," Harry insisted with a kind of desperation, "that's exactly what happened. Sounds cockeyed, but it's the truth!"

"Sure," said the patrolman soothingly, "and the city's full of queerries, as you know." He looked at Harry with a tolerant eye. "And where did you say you came from?"

"Maddox," said Harry, naming the Southern university town. "I'm a law student down there. Just came up last night to see about getting a job when I finish. And I'd be on my way back right now, if—"

"I know, I know," said the patrolman. "You missed your train, and you were winding your watch, and then this dame comes up and speaks to you, queer-like— Say!" He rocked back on his heels. "Can you describe her for me, now?"

"Of course! Dark hair, some kind of dark dress, not pretty. Not ugly, either. Just—well, ordinary."

"Nope," said the cop. "Doesn't sound like one of our reg'lars."

"Look," said Harry, exasperated, "I'm just wasting time talking to you. Where's your precinct headquarters?"

"I'll tell you," said the cop, "if you promise me one thing: When you get there, don't let on that I sent you." He smiled indulgently. "We're supposed to handle harmless cranks our-



"I am given to understand

selves, not pass 'em along to Headquarters."

"Thanks," snapped Harry. "I'll remember that!"

"Well, Mr.—ah—Clarke," said the Lieutenant at Precinct Headquarters, "I don't doubt your word, or anything like that. But after all, you're not reporting anything criminal, are you? I mean, it's not against the law to go around quoting from 'Alice in Wonderland,' is it?"

"That was just for identification," Harry said impatiently. "It was some kind of password, that's all, and I happened to give the right counter-sign. But—"

The Lieutenant lifted his shoulders in an Old-World gesture. "May have been a couple of harmless cranks. May all be part of some treasure hunt,



that you do not miss. However, in case you do miss, Carlo has orders to kill you instantly."

or practical joke. I'm sure you understand that in a town of this size—"

"I know," Harry interrupted him, "anything can happen." He stood up. "I think I'll go to the F.B.I. with this. Maybe I wouldn't get quite such a brush-off."

The Lieutenant smiled a little. His name was Goldstein, and he was about thirty-five, with smooth black hair and a long intelligent face that might have belonged to one of the Pharaohs. "I'm inclined to think you would. They're even more harassed by false leads than we are. You'd be surprised how many people are sure they've discovered a plot to blow up the Holland Tunnel, or believe the lady next door is slowly poisoning her husband."

Harry reached for his hat. "I'll risk it," he said grimly.

"Wait a minute," the Lieutenant said in tones of resignation. "I've got an idea. Suppose I send you down to that address in a call car. If there's anything suspicious, we'll investigate. If not, you go on back to law school like a good boy and stop bothering us. Fair enough?"

"Okay," Harry said. "That sounds reasonable."

Lieutenant Goldstein pressed a button. "Anything to oblige a visitor," he murmured.

The driver of the police car, somewhat to Harry's surprise, was a Negro patrolman, exceedingly neat and alert. His name was Daniels, and he listened to Harry's story without any display of skepticism. "Sounds like some sort of smuggling racket to me," he said. "Or possibly dope-peddling. The

man had an accent, you say? What kind? Was it Spanish? They run a lot of heroin up from Cuba."

"No," said Harry slowly. "Too guttural for that, really."

"Too bad you said what you did," Daniels commented. "Probably alerted the whole crowd."

"I know," said Harry miserably. "Just seemed funny at the time."

Daniels threw him a sympathetic glance. "Maybe it did no harm," he said soothingly. "Sometimes those gangs are set up so that the small fry don't even know each other. They're just separate links in the chain. That way they can't squeal if one of 'em gets picked up." He slowed to avoid a disdainful metropolitan cat. "That's probably why they were using passwords. 'Alice in Wonderland'—hah!"

They came to Fifteenth Street and turned west through a maze of tangled traffic. Big trucks made solid lines along both curbs; taxis hooted stridently; pedestrians pushing odd-looking carts and hand-barrows darted in and out like minnows.

"Boy," said Harry, "wonder they don't all have ulcers!"

Daniels grinned. "Lots of 'em do."

The traffic thinned out as they neared the river; the tall buildings gave way to ancient brownstones, dingy with the grime of decades. Daniels slowed the car and began reading off the numbers: six twelve; six eighteen; six twenty. . . . The car came to an abrupt halt. "Well," he said, "that's a dead-end, all right."

Six twenty-four no longer existed. Or rather, it existed only as a shell. The front steps and most of the façade were intact, but inside, a crew of languid workmen were collecting their demolition tools. The roof was gone; the windows were gaping holes; there were no floors—just a depression in the earth full of rubble and old timbers. Number six twenty-six and six twenty-eight were in a similar stage of demolition.

"Wait a sec'," Daniels said. He slid out from under the wheel, mounted the steps, pushed open the door. He stood there, silhouetted against the sky, and Harry saw him beckoning to one of the workmen, evidently the foreman. There was a brief conversation; then Daniels came back. "He says there'll be a big garage on this site. He's been on this demolition job three weeks. He's on the level; I know the company he's working for. So—" He gave Harry a questioning look.

"So I'm crazy," Harry said glumly. "So I was walking in my sleep and dreamed the whole thing."

Daniels climbed back into the car. "I don't think you dreamed it. Just one of those trails leading nowhere, that's all. Are you sure you had the right address?"

"I wrote it down," Harry told him. "Don't see how I could have made a mistake." But now he was not so sure.

"Now what?" Daniels asked. "Back to Headquarters?"

"Not for me," Harry said firmly. He didn't want Goldstein gloating over him. Not that he would gloat, probably, but still he— "Just drop me somewhere on Broadway, will you? I'll catch a movie, or maybe two, and then take myself back to Maddox like a good little boy. Oh, yes, and tell the Lieutenant I'm sorry I bothered him, will you?"

"That's all right," Daniels said easily. "That's what he's there for—to be bothered."

He let Harry out at Times Square, waved a comradely hand, and was gone. A nice guy, Harry thought; a competent guy. Just went to show you. . . .

He started walking north on Broadway, feeling aimless and defeated. He looked at his watch. Five-fifteen. Already the big electric signs were blazing through the dusk, and hordes of humanity were surging along the sidewalks. Like schools of voracious fish, Harry thought, hungry for entertainment, ready to snap at any bait that would fill, momentarily, the emptiness inside of them.

He came to a brightly lighted movie marquee and hesitated. The movie itself did not attract him particularly, but he had nothing else to do. It was too early for a solitary dinner. Lord, he thought, what's lonelier than a big town where you don't know anyone?

He went up to the booth, gave the blonde goddess behind the glass twice as much money as any movie could be worth, and went inside. He chose a seat in the rear and settled down in the stuffy darkness.

But the film did not hold his attention. Almost at once he found himself re-living the curious interlude in the Pennsylvania Station, testing his recollection of what had been said, racking his memory for any clue that might have escaped him. But there was none.

The address, he thought again—could he have misread his own writing? He fished out the envelope and stared at it in the gloom, turning it to catch the light from the screen. No, it was plain enough. Six two four W one five. Could she have said *east* Fifteenth? No, he could still hear her flat expressionless voice: "Six two four west fifteen." And, accusingly: "You're five minutes early. After this, be on time."

He sighed and squirmed lower in his seat until he was almost resting on his shoulder-blades. Two seats away a pair of eager adolescents were munching popcorn, faces rapt and fascinated. He envied them. He wrenched his attention back to the screen.

MERCIFULLY, at last, the feature ended. The news was followed by *Donald Duck*, whose vicissitudes, as usual, were worth the price of admission. Then came some trailers, extolling the merits of forthcoming attractions. "So do not fail," urged the doom-like voice, "to see how this tormented woman kept her rendezvous with destiny."

All at once Harry sat bolt upright. Rendezvous! Nobody had said that he was to be *inside* 624 West 15 at seven o'clock. He was to be *there*, that was all. Of course! To receive

another message, get further instructions. What a fool he was, what fools they all were! Leaning forward tensely, he cupped his hand over his watch. The radium hands glowed greenly in the dark: six forty-four. He had sixteen minutes. Time to call Goldstein, time to explain all this, to plead, to cajole? Hell, no! He jumped up and floundered toward the aisle, ignoring the shrinking feet, the angry muttered protests. This time he'd see it through alone.

Outside, he wrenched open the door of a taxi. He gave the address. "Make it snappy," he said.

The glowing galaxy of Broadway fell behind. They shot west to Tenth Avenue, then south. At Fifteenth they turned west again. "Gonna be tough to read dem numbers, Mac," the driver said.

"Let me out here," Harry told him. "This is close enough."

HE paid the fare, watched the red eye of the tail-light move away. He stood still, listening to the myriad sounds of the city, muted now that the traffic had ceased to roar. Ahead of him the street seemed incredibly dark; a few street-lights threw pools of radiance that were sucked up greedily by the all-pervading night.

He began to walk quickly along the south sidewalk. His footsteps sounded loud, challenging, and he found himself leaning forward, trying to keep his heels from making so much noise. He had an odd, uncomfortable feeling that hidden eyes were watching him, but he could see no one. The street seemed deserted.

He came to the gutted building that was his objective. A street-lamp stood almost opposite, and the backless façade looked unreal in the yellow light—like an abandoned movie set. He glanced at his watch. Six fifty-six. He sat down resolutely on the steps and lit a cigarette. Four minutes to wait.

He began counting the seconds, the way he had learned to do in his football days when he played end and had to get his timing right for a delayed pass: One chimpanzee, two chimpanzees, three chimpanzees. . . . Idiotic, but pretty accurate.

At eighty-two chimpanzees he heard footsteps coming toward him; not fast, not slow. A woman's step; only high heels made that kind of click. He watched her come out of the dark, swinging her hips, a thin silhouette, emaciated almost. Her face was a pale blur with a scarlet slash for a mouth. Opposite him she hesitated, and he sat motionless, tense, waiting. Then she walked on slowly. At the edge of the pool of light she looked back. He did not move. She passed on out of sight.

He counted ninety-seven more chimpanzees. Then again he heard something—a faint tapping, irregular, metallic, coming toward him. He drew hard on his cigarette; he could not identify the sound. It was like footsteps, but too frequent. He strained his eyes and caught a glimmer of white. It moved toward him slowly, and all at once he saw it was the sort of cane that blind pedestrians use. A man was carrying it: portly, gray-haired, quite well-dressed. He wore glasses. When his cane touched the lamp-post opposite Harry he stopped. He did not turn his head. He spoke suddenly out of the side of his mouth: "Seven maids."

Harry hesitated for half a second. "Seven mops!"

"This way," said the blind man harshly. He wheeled and started back the way he had come, cane tapping confidently along the curb.

Harry stood up and his shadow, black and enormous, rose with him. He found that his heart was pounding with a slow ponderous rhythm that seemed to echo the rhythm in his brain:

*"If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
"That they could get it clear?"
"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.*

The blind man was only a blurred shadow now, receding into the night. Go on, Harry said savagely to himself; you've come this far—see it through! He flung his cigarette away; it made a brief glowing arc through the darkness. He began to walk rapidly after the blind man. He wished—with an intensity that startled him, for he had never considered himself a coward—that Patrolman Daniels, or even Lieutenant Goldstein were with him. There was something about that sightless apparition, that grating voice. . . .

Six or eight houses down the block the blind man turned sharply, passed through an opening in a rusty iron fence that guarded a cellar entrance, descended the five steps that led to the door, and waited. Harry followed, stumbling twice. His guide reached out and gripped his arm; the blunt fingers were like iron. Then he took out a key and opened the door.

INSIDE was darkness, absolute, impenetrable. The blind man stepped inside, drawing Harry with him. The door clicked behind them. "This way," said the blind man again.

Harry felt himself led along what seemed to be a hall toward a thread of light that showed under a door at the far end. He could hear his companion's hoarse breathing. There was a smell of stale cooking in the air.

The blind man knocked twice, then three times. Another lock clicked; the door swung open; a block of yellow light fell into the corridor. The grip on Harry's wrist tightened, and he was drawn into the room.

It was a drab place that evidently had been used as a laundry. Two zinc tubs stood together against the stained wall. There was a wooden table covered with oilcloth, three or four chairs, and at the rear a flight of stairs leading up into darkness. The room was lighted by two naked bulbs dangling from the ceiling, and around these two sources of light swirled a dim gray fog of cigarette smoke. A small man with reddish ferret eyes sat in one of the chairs. The man who had opened the door had the body of a gorilla and the face of a petulant child.

THE blind man threw his cane on the table and touched the back of one of the chairs. "Sit here," he said to Harry. He did not sound like an American; he sounded like a European educated in England. He took the chair at the head of the table. The ferret-faced man did not move. The man who had opened the door remained standing.

"There is no time to lose," the blind man said in his rasping voice. "They will leave their hotel at seven-thirty. They are very punctual, as you know." His hand flicked in the direction of the ferret-face. "This is Nicholas, your driver. You will sit in front, with him. The weapon is in the car. Carlo will be behind you in case"—the harsh voice hesitated for a fraction of a second—"in case anything goes wrong. They will probably come out together, in which case you will kill them both, of course. If Andreyev should come first, let him go. Malinov is more important, for reasons which need not concern you. If he comes out first, kill him and forget about Andreyev. Is that clear?"

Harry sat rigid. Malinov, Soviet Delegate to the United Nations. Andreyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R. He had seen their faces a thousand times in the newspapers, in newsreels, even on television. Malinov coldly handsome; Andreyev looking like a Slavic Santa Claus. *Kill them?*

The rasping voice was proceeding inexorably: "Your car will develop engine trouble just south of the Park Avenue entrance. Nicholas will raise the hood and pretend to examine the engine. You will have a clear field of fire. I am given to understand that you do not miss; that is your great talent. However, I should like to warn you that in case you do miss, or lose your nerve, or try to change your mind, Carlo has orders to kill you instantly."



He spoke suddenly out of the side of his mouth: "Seven maids."

Harry turned his head. The baby face nodded at him, smiling. The gorilla right hand took out a black automatic, cradled it, put it back. The hand stayed in the pocket with it.

The blind man produced an envelope. "Here is a partial payment in advance. You will pick up the rest—afterward. With Nicholas driving, your get-away should be easy. I shall await your return with interest. That is all."

Wait, a voice was crying inside Harry, it's all a mistake. I'm Harry Clarke, a law student down at Maddox. I'm not. . . . But no sound came from him. If he told them now, they would certainly kill him. And if he did not tell them. . . . It's not real, he thought wildly, it's a nightmare. It can't be. . . .

"Take your money," the blind man said impatiently.

Harry saw his own hand reach out and take the envelope. He heard the door swing open behind him, and for one agonized second he thought of making a break for it. But Carlo's bulk was already receding down the corridor, blocking it, and Nicholas was on his feet beside him, tongue darting out to lick thin lips like the tongue of a snake.

The blind man leaned back in the chair. "Good hunting, gentlemen," he said, and Harry had the terrifying conviction that behind the dark glasses the sightless eyes were full of a wild unholy glee. Then he was in the corridor with Nicholas close behind, and then on the sidewalk where Carlo waited, and then he was in the front seat of a car, and across his knees was a heavy leather case that Nicholas took from the floor and handed him silently.

The car moved away swiftly, silently. He opened the case and in the intermittent glow from the passing streetlights saw the polished wood and dull metal of the tommy-gun. He took it out and rested it on his knees, fingers fluttering until they touched the safety-catch, because he thought he might be able to whirl and shoot Carlo and then get Nicholas before Nicholas got him. But he felt on the back of his neck the faintest kiss of steel, and in the rear-view mirror he could see Carlo's moon-face just over his left shoulder, and he knew it was hopeless.

The car moved east and then north and then east again, Nicholas with his ferret-face tight and expressionless, and his little claws rigid on the wheel, and Carlo's face filling the whole mirror, and the seconds ticking away, and the minute hand of the dashboard clock moving down, down, down toward the bottom.

THEY turned east on 34th. The light was against them at Eighth Avenue, but a cop was directing traffic, and he raised a majestic hand and waved them through.

Harry's mouth was dry, and he thought of screaming something to the cop, or throwing the tommy-gun out of the window, or even firing a burst into the air, but he knew that he would never live to see what happened after that, and so he did nothing.

The wild thought did occur to him that maybe he owed it to his fellow-countrymen, or the U.N., or just to humanity in general to prevent this thing from happening, even if it cost his own life. But he was afraid to die, that was all there was to it; and even if he had to die anyway, he wanted to go on living until the last possible second. And so he did nothing. He sat there feeling the sweat

come through the palms of his hands, making the grips on the tommy-gun wet and slippery, and the traffic lights kept going by—all of them green it seemed to him, never a red one to slow them down or stop them.

Then suddenly they were at the foot of the ramp on Park Avenue where the northbound traffic flows around Grand Central Station, and Nicholas fed more gas to the car, and it jumped forward, swinging around the tight turns, and Harry found himself praying wordlessly, although he didn't think it would do much good.

They plunged down off the ramp, and the lights were green again, and the dashboard clock showed twenty-nine minutes past seven. They covered three blocks in twenty seconds, and Nicholas cut the ignition, and the car began to coast. Just south of the entrance to the great hotel he braked it to a stop. He stepped once on the starter, and it snarled but did not catch. A taxi-driver swinging his cab around the corner swore at them, but Nicholas got out, unhurriedly, opened the hood on the driver's side and leaned down over the engine.

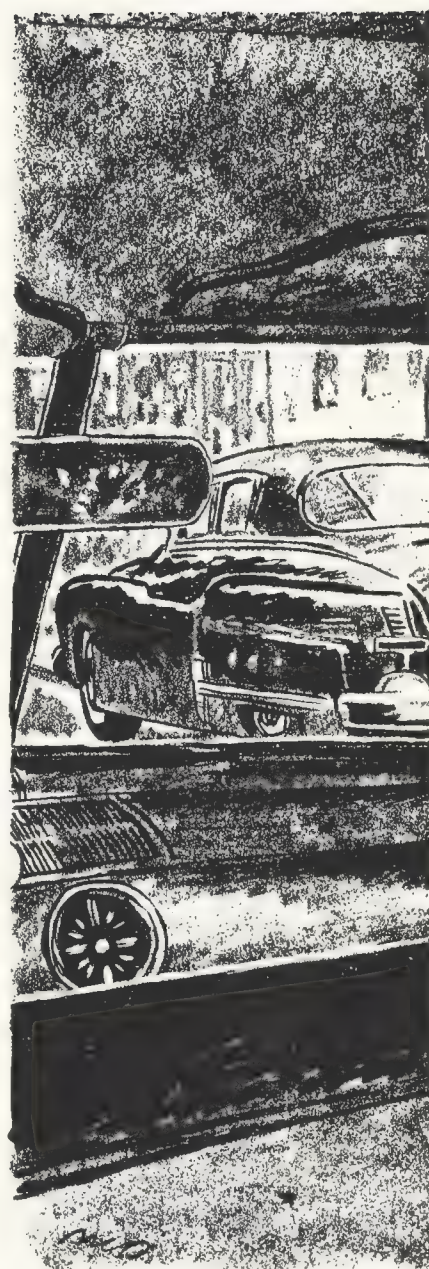
HARRY felt the iron ring at the back of his neck increase its pressure; he heard Carlo breathing hard, and he raised the tommy-gun so that the muzzle was almost on a level with the window but not quite. His mind felt numb, and he decided to let his body function for him, because he knew it would function one way or another when it came to the last split-second.

Then a long gleaming sedan rolled up to the entrance of the hotel. One of the chauffeurs—there were two—leaped out and opened the rear door. The hotel doorman swung open his glass door and stood stiffly, waiting. And down the steps that led to the door Harry saw them coming, brisk and formal in black overcoats and black homburgs.

He saw Nicholas shrink down by the side of the car, and the iron ring at the back of his neck gave him a vicious prod. He looked in the mirror and saw the snarling baby face behind him, and he sat there frozen, waiting for his body to do something or not do something, because his mind had no power over it any more.

Then he heard Nicholas give a sudden strangled cry and fling up his hands, and at the same instant there was a smashing, rending impact. He felt himself flung violently forward, and he thought, quite clearly: *This is what it feels like to get a slug in the brain.* Then everything was black.

He came out of it slowly, and for a while it was like floating in a thick white mist with muffled hammers beating in his head. But after a while



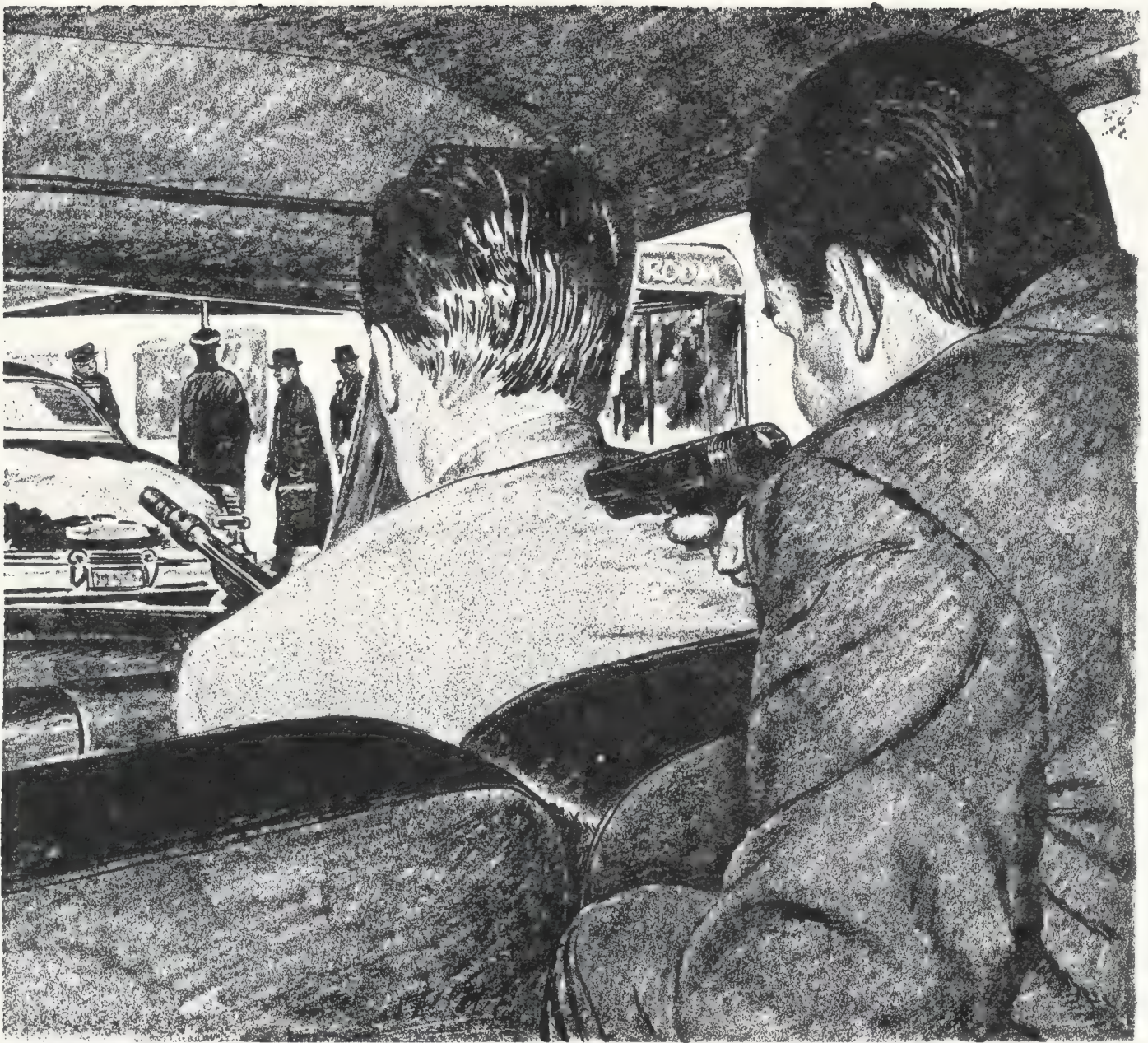
He looked in the mirror

the fog lifted and he could see quite clearly. He was lying in bed in a room that could only be a hospital room, and Lieutenant Goldstein was watching him benignly.

This erased his first coherent thought, which was that he was dead, and Lieutenant Goldstein removed any lingering doubt by saying, a moment later: "You're a lucky boy; just a concussion, they tell me." He added: "I notified your law school. They've been in touch with your family."

Harry made a great effort and said: "How?"

"We trailed you, naturally," Lieutenant Goldstein said. "I couldn't figure out what you were up to, until it was almost too late. Then I had to bump you, hard. You should see the front end of my car." He shook



and saw the snarling face behind him, and sat there frozen, body and mind powerless.

his head sadly. "Four hundred bucks' worth of damage, at least."

Harry raised a hand and touched a bandage round his head. He said: "Those men—"

"We've got 'em," said the Lieutenant. "Big one was out—colder than you, if possible. Little one was sort of troublesome. Tried to shoot everybody, but he was a lousy shot." He grinned reminiscently. "You should've seen those Russians duck for cover, though. Guess they've had plenty of practice."

Harry tried to sit up suddenly. "Blind man!"

"Relax," said Lieutenant Goldstein; "we've got him too. Picked him up as soon as you left, in fact. I had six men covering that street." He stretched his arms over his head. "Not a bad night's work. We don't know

yet exactly who those jokers are. All we know is that they'd love to see Russia and the U.S.A. tangle in an all-out war, and they thought a couple of assassinations would do it." He stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Might be some remnants of the old Trotsky gang. Figured if somebody knocked off the boys in the Kremlin, they might wind up on top."

HARRY'S voice sounded stronger, now. "They gave me some money. It's in my pocket."

"Did they, now?" Lieutenant Goldstein looked innocent. "We have no record of that. Don't want one, either. Thing's complicated enough as it is. We've got to pretend it was a routine cops-and-robbers chase. Don't want the Commies thinking they were the clay pigeons."

There was silence for a while. A rather pretty nurse looked in, smiled, and went away. Harry said, finally: "How come you went down there anyway?"

"Same reason you did, I guess. Got to thinking, after Daniels made his report, and decided it was just a contact point. If you hadn't showed up, I was going to try sitting on those steps myself."

Harry smiled, feeling a little superior. "And what would you have said when they tossed you the password: 'Seven maids?'"

"Why, seven cops, of course," said Lieutenant Goldstein without batting an eye. He stood up. "Better get some shut-eye, Junior. You've had a busy day."

And he went out, whistling softly to himself.

Cops and Robbers in a

THIS NEW YORK PAWNBROKER HAS REPEATEDLY BEEN OF GREAT HELP TO THE POLICE IN THE CAPTURE OF CRIMINALS.

by MARY ELIZABETH COMERS

Illustrated by Raymond Thayer

HARRY WIESENBERGER'S pawnshop is a plain-faced little store on New York's noisy, dusty Eighth Avenue. Its neighbors are other pawnshops, steamy restaurants, prize-fight managers' offices, tawdry rooming-houses, a tattoo "artist" studio. Unlike many business men in this raucous neighborhood near Madison Square Garden, Harry Wiesenberger keeps his front windows washed, his floor spotless.

He also keeps a gun in his desk.

One morning last summer he glanced up to see a furtive young man entering the front door.

"I need ten bucks," the fellow said, and put a diamond ring on the counter. Wiesenberger put a jeweler's magnifying glass to his eye, studied the ring thoughtfully, asked the man where he had got it.

"My sister give it to me for Christmas."

The man was lying, Harry Wiesenberger knew, so he went into a routine which in thirty years has landed some fifteen hundred criminals in jail and resulted in the recovery of more than a million dollars' worth of stolen property. Keeping up a rapid conversation, Wiesenberger lifted the receiver from a telephone concealed under the counter, and dialed the West 47th Street police station. He had practiced that number so long he didn't need to look at the dial. Then he raised his voice slightly.

"Looks like a good ring," he said, talking to the customer. "Let you have ten dollars on it. Any time you need money, come to Wiesenberger. That's my name, Wiesenberger."

He quietly replaced the receiver. At the police station around the corner his familiar voice started two detectives for the pawnshop on the run. In the store two clerks had been

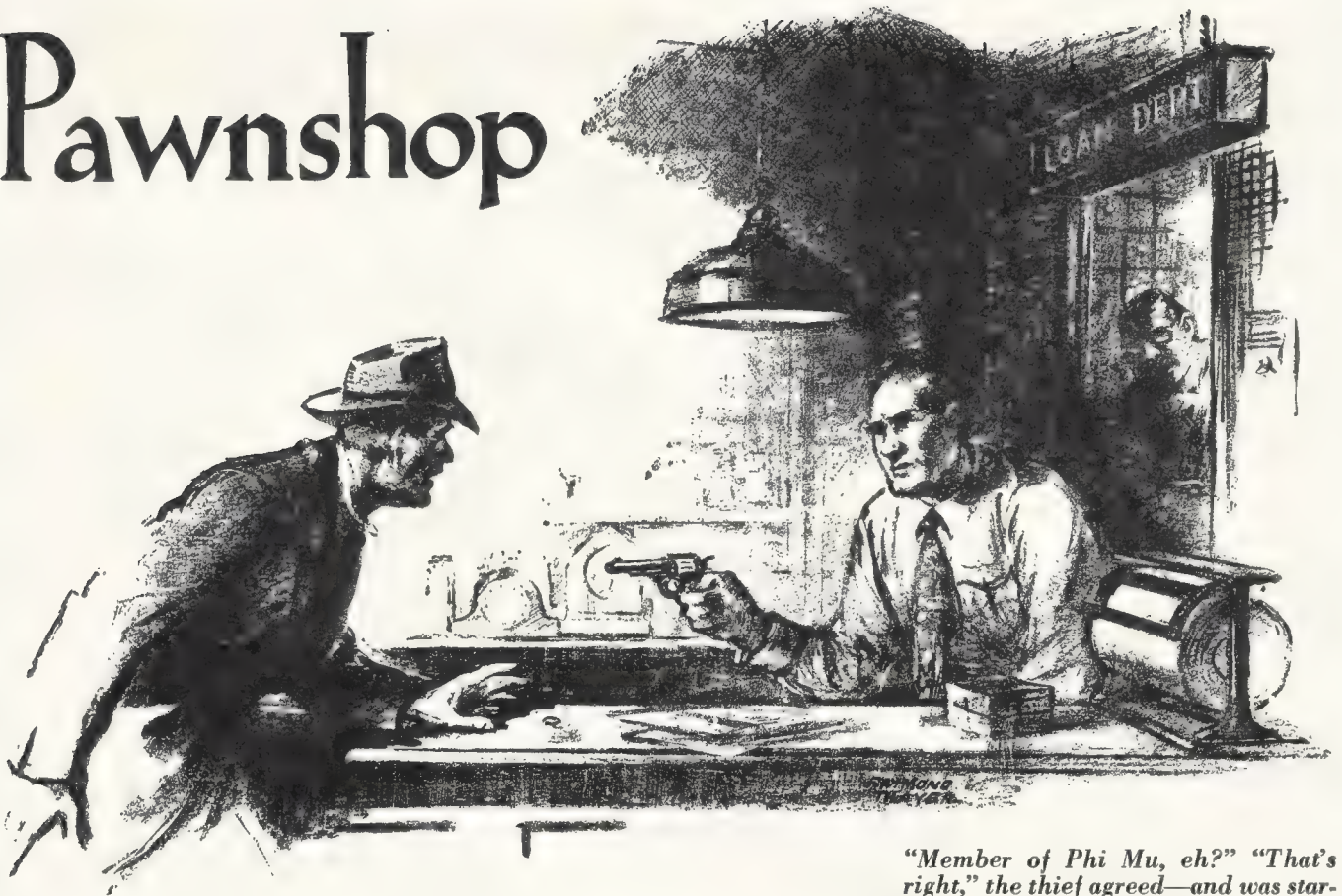
watching their employer, waiting for a signal. When he arched his right eyebrow slightly, one went quietly to the front door and closed it. It had a self-snapping lock. Then Wiesenberger brought his hand up from under the counter, and the customer found himself looking into the barrel of a black revolver.

"Put up your hands," the pawnbroker said firmly, and the man quickly obeyed. In a matter of seconds the detectives were pounding on the front door. They searched the man, found a dozen pieces of jewelry stolen a week before in a New Jersey burglary.

"It is very simple," Wiesenberger explained. "That ring was worth a thousand dollars—it didn't take an expert to know that. But this guy didn't guess what it was worth. That meant it wasn't his. A man doesn't pledge a thousand-dollar ring on a ten-dollar loan. So I took him."



Pawnshop



He has been "taking" criminals ever since he went to work in the pawnshop for his father thirty years ago. The newspapers have reported his law-enforcement activities hundreds of times, but thieves and even murderers continue to wander into his shop and find themselves looking down the black barrel of his revolver.

Wiesenberger is a chunky, middle-sized man of forty-six, with dark luminous eyes, thinning hair, mobile features and a quiet voice. He wears expensive, well-cut clothes unobtrusively, smokes a straight-stemmed pipe. A bachelor, he lives in a pleasant apartment overlooking Central Park. Week-ends he likes to cruise in his boat on Long Island Sound; the rest of the week he plays cops-and-robbers in his shop.

His office walls, well out of customers' view, are covered with citations from the FBI and from police departments all over America. He wears the gold badge of an honorary New York City police lieutenant, has many other badges presented by grateful officials in cities from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border.

HARRY WIENBERGER was sixteen and serving as a new clerk in his father's shop—across the street from his present store—when he helped catch his first criminal. On the floor above was a cheap rooming-house. The landlady reported to him one day that two suspicious-looking men had rented a room the day before, and that this morning she had found a little pile of plaster chunks in a bureau drawer. Young Wiesenberger slipped upstairs when the lodgers had gone out, and found that a large hole had been sawed in the floor above the pawnshop and

"Member of Phi Mu, eh?" "That's right," the thief agreed—and was startled to find himself looking at a pistol.

the boards fitted back in place. The plaster came from the shop ceiling. Only a thin layer remained, easy to break through.

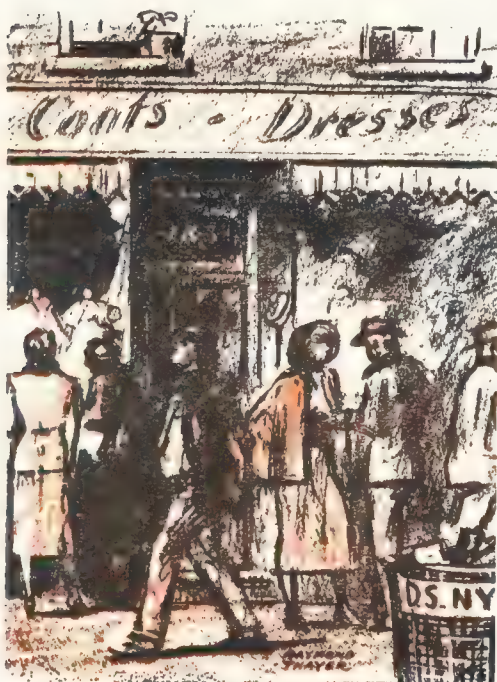
He reported to the police, and that night he waited with a detective in the darkened store, helped subdue the burglars when they dropped a rope through the hole and slid to the floor. The men had long been hunted, and the police were very grateful to him.

He has been giving them a spirited hand ever since, for two reasons. He loves the excitement of it. But more important, he has a feeling that every citizen should assume a share of public responsibility.

"If you see a snake when you're walking in the park," he says, "you pick up a stick and kill it."

He has picked up his stick fifteen hundred times since that first exciting night in the unlighted shop, and has earned many thousands of dollars in cash rewards, which he turns over to the New York police benefit fund for widows and children of officers killed on duty.

Among his snakes in the park was a murderer he captured last March. A twenty-two-year-old burglar named Harry Mullis, who had spent a third of his young life behind bars, was wanted in Florida for burglary, car theft and parole violation. He was



arrested in California, and Constable Luther Hardison of Coral Gables went there to get him. On the return trip, on U. S. Highway 90 near Mobile, Alabama, Mullis killed the constable with the officer's gun, and escaped.

A manhunt extending from coast to coast was still in progress when Mullis walked into the New York store and tried to pawn the murder weapon. Why he chose Wiesenberg's pawnshop among the 159 in Greater New York, no one knows. He laid the gun on the counter, but kept his hand close to it. Wiesenberg recognized it as a police model. He did not dare attempt to use the telephone, so he signaled with one eyebrow to Charles Alpert, a clerk. Alpert quietly closed the front door, and from a concealed

Harry waited with a detective in the darkened store, and helped subdue the burglars when they dropped through.



telephone (there are several in the shop) called the precinct station. Detectives came running.

As they barged in, Mullis grabbed for the gun, but the pawnbroker was too quick for him. Mullis then pulled a tear-gas pistol out of his pocket, but it jammed. The detectives knocked it out of his hand. Alabama officers took him back for trial, and Wiesenberg spent a soul-satisfying week in Mobile, testifying as to his part in the capture and palling around with the grateful police. His evidence helped secure the death penalty.

About ten years ago an escaped convict named Mead, from the Connecticut State Prison, tried to pawn some jewelry at the shop. He arrived in a Cadillac convertible, wore an expensive diamond on his finger, a Greek-letter society pin on the lapel of his well-tailored coat.

"I see you're a fraternity man," Wiesenberg said pleasantly. He leaned closer and looked at the pin. "Member of Phi Mu, eh?"

"That's right," the thief agreed—and was startled to find himself looking down the barrel of a pistol. He just didn't happen to know that the society Wiesenberg mentioned was a sorority, not a fraternity. The police were particularly glad to see him, for ever since his prison escape he had been burglarizing big houses in Westchester County. In his room the officers found several hundred thousand dollars' worth of loot.

Although many of the culprits who go to jail through the pawnshop door are petty thieves, pilferers and small-time confidence men, about one in a dozen proves to be a criminal desperately wanted by the police. Youngsters in great need of money sometimes bring property snatched from their parents and try to pawn it. In those cases Wiesenberg rarely calls the police. Instead he sits down in his back office for a heart-to-heart talk with the young miscreant, then telephones the parents and has a heart-to-heart talk with them.

"I keep track of those kids," he says. "Most of them turn out all right."

HE shows no softness, however, for the professional criminal. His best snake-killing week was in January, 1947, when in five days he caught three thieves. First, a man named Dakin tried to pawn a diamond bar pin and told a fishy story about where he got it. Wiesenberg used his telephone, and Dakin admitted a series of burglaries. Next morning a young man in Navy uniform came in with a lavallière and brooch and an unconvincing story that they had been left him by his dead sister. Again the locked door and telephone routine.

The police searched the suspect, found twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of loot which had been taken in a New Jersey burglary.

Three days later a young ex-convict sauntered into the shop and tried to unload two valuable rings he had snatched from a jeweler's tray. He had a plausible tale of his family's need of quick cash and its decision to pawn the jewels.

"Just call 'em up and they'll tell you my story's true," he suggested, and gave a Midtown telephone number where a confederate was ready to vouch for him. Wiesenberg pretended to call the number, but instead dialed the police station.

"Fellow here with some jewelry has a story I want to verify," he began, and while he still was talking, the police arrived.

How does Harry Wiesenberg distinguish between the honest man down on his luck and the criminal out to raise money?

"YOU have to understand human nature," he says, "both in the pawn-broking business and in the police business. You have to know how people act in particular circumstances. If they don't act that way, you get suspicious. Take women and their fur coats. A woman will pawn her fur coat if she needs money in summer, but never in cold weather. She'll pledge anything else she owns, but she'll hold on to that coat if it's cold, whether it's a ten-thousand-dollar piece or something she picked up at a rummage sale. So when a woman brings in a fur in January, I watch my step."

Consequently he was on his guard one bitter morning when a hard-faced blonde put a beautiful fur on his counter and asked how much he would lend on it. He knew at a glance that the fur was worth thousands; it certainly was out of the class of the cheap-looking woman who pretended to own it.

"I suppose you have a bill-of-sale for the garment," he said pleasantly, and raised his eyebrow. One of the clerks sauntered to the front door and quietly locked it. The woman saw him.

"Sure, I got the bill right here," she said, and reached into her handbag—and jerked out not a bill of sale but a .22-caliber automatic pistol, aimed squarely at Wiesenberg and squeezed the trigger. The gun clicked but did not go off.

Clerks twisted the weapon out of her hand, held her until the police arrived. In her handbag detectives found an address. They raided the apartment—and found the notorious hoodlum Bugsy Siegal there. At the moment he was not "wanted" by the

police, but was hiding out from a rival gang that did want him very much. He actually had bought the fur coat and had given it to the "girl friend." She naturally had not wanted her hard-boiled lover to know that she was turning the gift into cash. Wiesenberger returned the fur promptly, with apologies—and testified against the woman for carrying concealed weapons.

WIESENBERGER has bulging scrapbooks filled with newspaper accounts of his exploits. And last March to the many framed citations on his walls he added a scroll, signed by New York's racket-busting police commissioner, Thomas Murphy, honoring him for "jeopardizing his own life while assisting in the apprehension of many dangerous criminals."

At the presentation ceremony a police official commented that it was "too bad there are not more pawnbrokers like this man."

Wiesenberger agreed.

"Too many pawnbrokers," he says, "will loan money on nearly anything anyone puts up, without any investigation. If a man pledges a thousand-dollar jewel on a fifty-dollar loan and then doesn't show up to reclaim it, it's a fine profit for the pawnbroker. But it gives the whole business a bad name. I'm just trying in my small way to get back some of the respectability we had in the old days when my father ran the store."

Ninety-eight out of a hundred loans are legitimate, he says, and are duly repaid. Most of his business is with prize-fighters from neighboring Madison Square Garden, or theatrical folk "between plays." Some famous names are on his books, but he refuses to disclose them.

Years ago a carnival actor, who had diamonds set in his front teeth, walked into the shop and said he needed two hundred dollars to go to a Southwest State in an emergency.

"All I've got is these diamonds," he confessed, "and I can't part with them."

Wiesenberger talked to him for twenty minutes, made the loan without security, got full repayment, made a friend for life. One day recently the man walked in, flashed his diamond-studded smile, shook hands and presented the pawnbroker with complimentary tickets to a show in which he is appearing.

"I don't forget old friends," he said with a sparkling grin.

Aside from the moral aspects of his one-man crime-busting campaign, aside from the friends he has made, Harry Wiesenberger has a lot of fun. Cops-and-robbers is a dangerous and exciting game. He plays it well and often.

—THE END

Facts — about Football

by JOHN DUNLAVY

THE safest spot for a football player is smack in the middle of the line. According to Dr. Floyd R. Eastwood's annual football fatalities study, centers have the least number of injuries. Most injuries are sustained by halfbacks, followed by ends, tackles, fullbacks, quarterbacks, guards and, finally, centers.

One needs more than muscle to play professional football these days. So intricate and numerous are the plays used that many top names, even All-Americans, have been turned down by pro teams because they couldn't make the grade on class work. The Cleveland Browns even has "exams" to aid in screening prospects, which count more than press clippings.

The average top professional football team has an active repertoire of some 350 plays, which the entire squad must know cold.

The summer training grind for the long, grueling pro football season is as tough as the schedule itself. The typical day starts at seven A. M. with an hour's chalk-talk with movies, an hour of calisthenics, and an hour and a half devoted to field practice, conditioning runs and obstacle courses before lunch. Two more hours follow in the classroom before a two-and-a-half-hour workout which includes scrimmage. After dinner it's back to the classroom from seven to nine-thirty. The welcomed curfew is at ten-thirty.

The greatest number of individual performance records ever established in the history of football were established in the toughest league of them all. When Don Hutson, considered the greatest end of all times, retired after eleven seasons of pro football with the Green Bay Packers, he held nineteen National League records.

The center does not have to pass the ball back between his legs. This is a custom, not a rule.

The first football was a human skull. When England was occupied by the Danes in the early part of the Eleventh Century, Englishmen showed their contempt for the occupying power by creating a game of kicking around a Danish skull. The game spread rapidly because of the high feeling of the people. Not long after this a barefoot boy substituted an inflated

cow bladder for the skull, as it was much easier on bare feet, and the game took on the air of a sport.

Red Grange's hair was never actually red. It's really a dark blond.

One of the most amazing performances in football history was that of Frosty Peters, a Montana freshman, in a game against Billings Poly in 1924. Peters dropkicked no less than seventeen field goals for a startling total of 51 points! Equally amazing is the fact that these seventeen field goals are not only the record for the most field goals in one game, but also the most in one season. Peters didn't kick another all year!

It is estimated that football pools constitute a fifty-million-dollar annual business.

The primary reason for the disappearance of the drop kick has been the virtually unnoticed streamlining of the ball. In order to aid the passer, the ball has been considerably narrowed, thus permitting a better grip and making possible longer and more accurate passes. Today's ball is 6.85 inches in diameter, almost an inch less than the average ball of thirty years ago. The modern ball takes an unpredictable bounce, and is consequently unreliable for drop kicking.

In his first seven years with the Chicago Bears, Jack Manders made 264 points after touchdown out of 282 attempts.

Hardly a game goes by without an intercepted pass, but only one man in history seems to have intercepted a kick. In the Navy-Michigan game at Ann Arbor in 1925, Navy was forced to try a punt from its own end zone. The kicker received the pass from center and started his punt but his foot never met the ball. W. R. Flora, Michigan's right end, flashed in and grabbed the ball midway between the kicker's hand and foot. He immediately grounded the ball, and Michigan had a touchdown on an "intercepted" kick.

Lou Groza, tackle for the Cleveland Browns, never got his hands on the ball during the entire season of 1946, yet led the league in scoring! His field goals and place-kicked conversions totaled 84 points for the individual high.

Roy Riegels wasn't the only one who was confused in the Rose Bowl game of 1929 when he ran the wrong way. The California center actually had interference from his own teammates on the initial phase of his sixty-eight-yard dash against Georgia Tech and the Tech players attempted to stop him. Later in the game a California touchdown run of 65 yards was called back when the nervous referee blew his whistle unnecessarily. Even the ball got into the act, collapsing on a blocked kick in the third period.

In the official rules, the center is called the "Snapper-back."

Most fans refer to the officials as "refs." Actually there is only one referee. He is the chief official, and he metes out the penalties. He is the only official with a whistle. His official station is behind the offensive team. The umpire is stationed behind the defensive team; the head linesman is on the side in line with the ball, the field judge is usually twenty-five to thirty yards behind the defensive line.

In a game between Southern California and the University of Washington in 1934, halfback Byron Haines of the Huskies scored all the points for both teams. On the kickoff he was caught behind his own goal, scoring a safety for Southern Cal. Later he scored his team's only touchdown, Washington winning, 6 to 2.

Unique in football history is the record of Notre Dame's 1946 national championship team. It topped all other teams in the country in both offense and defense. In nine games it rolled up the most yards—3972—as well as the highest average per game—441.3. They held their nine opponents to a total of 1275 yards on the ground, and in the air for an average of only 141.7 yards per game.

The touchdown twins of West Point, Davis and Blanchard, scored 97 touchdowns while members of Cadet teams, Glenn 59 and Doc 38.

The Ohio State-Illinois game of 1945 had two different endings. The first occurred at the end of the regulation fourth period with the score tied 26-26. The forty thousand spectators poured on the field and the teams headed for the dressing-rooms. Twenty minutes later, however, the two teams lined up for one more play in front of the empty stands with only the four officials and the press box watching. There had been a penalty on the final play, but the crowd had overflowed the field before the ref could get to the teams. On the final play Johnny Sturgis booted a field goal, making the second—and official—ending Ohio State 29, Illinois 26.

Tomorrow Will Come

It will surely come, for every man who is beaten now, but won't admit it; for every woman who says: For better, for worse, and means it, and gayly and gracefully makes the best of a bad bargain.

by EDWARD L. McKENNA

HOW about a little room, here? This is for you, if you like to hear those tiny heels go *pumperipum-peripum* in the stretch, that booming sound that's like no other drum in the world. It beats its tattoo in many a heart. There they go, the little jocks high up on the horses' necks, coaxing, cursing, whimpering in their eagerness, matching their rhythm with the beat of the straining animal beneath them. Come on, little horse! Come on, little horse! . . . I'll cut your heart out, Jock, I'll cut your heart out—don't you ride me off, don't you ride me off! Come on, little boy, come on, little boy! Whaddaya say, whaddaya say, whaddaya say! Going to town, going to town, going to town!

Then they come on, and the rhythm breaks; it's a welter and a scramble; the flag goes down, and the cameras click and they run the numbers up the post. You—you sadly tear up another ticket. But don't you care, for tomorrow will come, it will surely come, for every man who is beaten now, but won't admit it; for every woman who says: For better, for worse, and means it; and gayly and gracefully makes the best of a bad bargain. Tomorrow, once again, the poet said; and every brave man, every gallant woman can say it too, asking for nothing but a fair break and a square shake and another day. . . .

This is about a blackleg, a beautiful woman, and a horse that was set to lose but won instead, and left a great progeny, and a name that will last as long as there are stud-books and form-players to read them. . . . All this was long ago; but it's true now, and

it's going to be true for a long, long time. . . .

In the order of their appearance, then: Clarence L., L for Leicester Sims, once of the British Army, black-leg, tin-horn, short sport, welsher, gambler and thief. Enter the heroine: Stella Sims, his wife, born a Montgomery and lovely as your first girl, or your first granddaughter: And the horse was Silver Star.

Nobody seems to know much about this Sims, until he got over here. Maybe it wasn't even his name. That he served with the British Army appears to be certain: his build, his sturdy back, his sunburned face proclaimed it. Like them or not, they carry their shoulders well; and he weighed, as he said, fourteen stone—ah, that's one ninety-six, isn't it? He talked like that, never lost his accent; some thought he overemphasized it. . . . A fine, bluff, hearty man. He was smart; he was shrewd; he was cagey. He never told lies; he acted, acted, and let you make up the lie for yourself, and believe it. He never said he was an officer in His Majesty's forces. He said to John Montgomery, who addressed him jocularly or questioningly as Captain:

"Ah. I'm out of all that now. Titles are stupid, Army titles, don't you think? Nobody calls me Clarence, either. It was my mother's idea, and not really my fault. Call me Clare, if you like."

"I'm Jack to you, then," said Montgomery, who had his faults too, but timidity or dishonesty of any sort was not among them. There were Montgomerys who came here with Lord Baltimore—some people said that



Illustrated by
ORISON
MACPHERSON

the Montgomerneys thought they had showed him the way. They were haughty; they were proud; they sneered at many who were their superiors. They drank; they traveled; they gambled, but meantime a few of them made plenty of money and kept it, and added to it; and that was lucky for them, for there is no easier way to lose money than to keep racing stables, and horses, horses. Horses were their great weakness.

It isn't quite fair to say that Clare Sims was a fortune-hunter, and nothing else. He wasn't penniless, when he met John Montgomery, at the Yearling Sales. As a matter of fact, Sims bought a yearling or two, and sold them again, at a profit, at a loss, as in any other business. If Montgomery chose to esteem him another wealthy dilettante, a connoisseur like himself, that wasn't necessarily Sims' fault, any more than it's to his credit. A man can tell a lie, the worst, the meanest sort of lie, merely by keeping quiet at the wrong time. He might have said to Montgomery:

"Look here. I'm not an ex-officer in the British Army. I'm not a gentleman's son, gone wrong a little, and trying to make amends. I'm not a wealthy man. No: I'm a trader, a breeder, a horse-coper, a former farrier, an Army blacksmith, a horse-shoer. I've made a little stake. I have a shoestring, as you say. It's a little thin, but it's made out of rawhide, and I'm going to run it a long, long way."

He didn't say anything of the sort. . . . Well, what compulsion was upon him? He was a fine big man ap-

proaching the flower of his years, five feet eleven, close to two hundred pounds, florid, with clear blue ice-cold eyes, and a skin that was contemptuous of the heat, the cold, the sleet and the rain. He had, also, a fine vibrant low-pitched voice. It was that voice that got him Stella Montgomery, that voice, and all the rest.

His friend Montgomery had asked him down to Maryland. Why not? Sims dressed with the careless elegance of the class he admired, and he had the apparent casualness of aristocracy. He was glad enough to accept Montgomery's invitation, but it wasn't too important to him. Of course he could ride; of course he could shoot, and hunt and fish, and pass the time of day with sportsmen, at least for a while. And naturally, he met Stella Montgomery, and neither was too much impressed. Journeys end in lovers meeting? Sometimes—not always. She was a tall, red-headed girl, not too pretty until you began to take a good look at her, and not everyone did. She was what the French call "*fausse maigre*," false-thin, the girl who looks thin, but really isn't. The French think of everything.

It's possible that Stella was a throw-back, a replica of some fervent ancestor who did come with Baltimore in search of a new and better and less fettered world. Religious freedom too, they were seeking, or at least a few of them were. All the Montgomerneys kept at least the form of their faith, if only as a tradition; Stella kept the form and the letter of it. It was her temperament to take things seriously, to be thorough, to

be conscientious, as the old word is for trying to act like a gentleman, like a lady. Ride? Sure she could ride; riding came as natural as breathing to all of them; she couldn't remember when she couldn't ride. Horses she loved, and also almost all smaller animals, wild or semi-wild: deer, rabbits, chipmunks, dogs. She would not hunt. She would not fish. She would not drink—she hated it, for what it had done to some of her dearest; she wouldn't gamble, for the same reason. Imagine how well she got along with one of the fastest sets on the Eastern Shore! That's exactly how she did get along, for there is no intolerance greater than that of racing people. "T'ch, t'ch! That Stella Montgomery!" they said, but not too loud, for the Montgomerneys had their own sort of impatience.

ALONG came Lochinvar—well, he wasn't old: he was twenty-nine. Up betimes he was, of course, tubbed and scrubbed and tweedy, or chevioty or flannelly, at the very least, and taking a brisk walk before breakfast. He heard a piano, and—give him the benefit: perhaps his heart stood still. Stella played that sort of piano, and he was the man could hear it. Across the lawns he went and up the stairs, and bowed, and stood before her. "Do you mind, Miss Montgomery?" he said. "That's the Faure 'Crucifix,' isn't it?"

Without too much enthusiasm, Stella admitted that it was. But he was no timid boy, most assuredly not, by Jupiter. "So much better than the Palms, isn't it? The bary part is wonderful, don't you think? Very little

good Church music written with a good bary part. Of course, there is 'He giveth His beloved sleep.' And there is a part of the Tenebrae, quite wonderful. That's a bass and a bary, though. The harmony is rather unusual."

She looked at him, as if for the first time. "Is this what you mean?" she said, and played a few bars.

"Of course. Of course! How extraordinary! Surprising, surprising thing, haven't thought of it for—for so many years. Jerusalem. *Jerusalem Convertere te ad Dominum tuum*. . . Now, the bass, you see, the bass—sing it. Sing it. I'll fake the bass with the piano."

THE chords went crashing against the soaring baritone. He was good; he wasn't too good, but he was far better than the parlor baritone who is every good home's affliction.

Stella looked up at him, her cheeks were flaming. At that moment he looked like a boy, a fine, innocent, enthusiastic boy. After all, it's such a wonderful thing to sing and play to-

gether, and to know that you have never done any better, nor half so well, before. "Where did my brother run into you?" she said.

"Oh. In the paddock, at the Shore. The Yearling Sales. I'm a horse-trader, Miss Montgomery. Buy horses, sell them, raise them, bet a little. Horses—well, horses are about the most important thing in my life, I dare say."

That much was true. It was almost always true.

"How do you know this music?"

"Why. Well—you won't hold this against me, will you? I should hate that. I was a boy soprano, Miss Montgomery. You won't tell anyone, will you? I sang in a church, at home; it wasn't our church, of course. I had three shillings a Sunday. I—I grew very fond of the music, really."

Stella smiled, and she didn't smile that way so often. "I can't imagine you as a boy soprano. You have sung professionally, since?"

"I? Good heavens, no," he said, and he was truly horrified. "At home, we have at times what we call a

musical evening. Everyone must sing or play something. Ghastly, isn't it! But it's rather fun too, at times. Then of course in the Army, one sings a bit. Helps to pass the time. I—I play a banjo, too; I hope you won't tell anybody."

"No—you were in the Army? The British Army?"

"I was six years in South Africa. In the cavalry."

Presently, without too much coaxing, and in a fine offhand sort of way, Sims was urging some lady named Thora to speak to him, upon the somewhat insufficient grounds that he had loved her in life too little, and loved her in death too well. Immediately after, he was declaring that kings might play a weary part, Love, thrones might ring with wild alarms, but the kingdom of his heart, Love, lay within her loving arms. . . .

Nobody is laughing at these old songs; they aren't too bad. Let nobody laugh too bitterly at him either, nor sneer at him utterly, for he did love Stella, and that is certain. They were married, six weeks later, in the vestry of St. Michael's Church, in Baltimore. John Montgomery, beaming, was best man; and most of the kinsmen were there, if not to applaud, at least to acquiesce. Never was a more stalwart, red-faced, perspiring yet determined groom, nor a more radiant bride. She was just nineteen years old.

He tried to make a success of that marriage, to make a go of it, as he might have said. The man who says he didn't, lies. He spent his own money first, such as it was—a few thousand dollars, maybe, and perhaps more. Then he borrowed Stella's money, and there was plenty of it, and more when she was twenty-one, and he spent a lot of that too.

Their son was born dead, ten months after their marriage. They never had another child. Incidentally, it should be said that there never was even a whisper that Sims had as much as a casual flirtation with any other woman, and rest assured that had there been any such a thing, it would not have been whispered: it would have been shouted; for lots of people didn't like him, including some of those he never wronged.

HE bought and sold and bred horses, and raced them and bet on them: that is, he bet on them, at first. Everything, everything bad that can happen to a horse seemed to happen to theirs. Pulled tendons, broken legs, barren mares, stallions that lacked fire, colts with the colic, colts stillborn. . . . That was when they first found out, or began to suspect, to speculate about Clare Sims. The stable help were in the van. They are wise men,

"I was a boy soprano, Miss Montgomery. You won't tell anyone, will you?"



often; you can't put much over on them.

"Army officer? Army officer?" the grooms, the swipes, the apprentice jockeys muttered. "Him?" They saw him sweating, straining, blasphemous, obscene, casting all pretense aside—and doing work that would give a good vet plenty of worry, plenty of trouble. He was his own vet—and there were good reasons for that, and later, bad ones too. He could mend a fetlock, fire a tendon, treat the glanders, deliver a foal—yes, twin foals once, though he lost them all, the foals and the laboring mare. Astra, her name was, Astra, named after the stars. Silver Star, their great horse was. Stella, that means star, too, doesn't it?

THAT night he sat at home with Stella; he wasn't home so many nights after the first year or two. There was a bourbon bottle close at hand. He wasn't a Scotch drinker; he had learned several American sports and pastimes. Stella put up with this, Stella, who hated liquor. He could drink hard, too, and never show it, and he could seem to drink hard, and to show it, while his wits were working well and true. A pinchbeck Booth, a road-show Barrymore, a third-class ham, a strolling player—maybe that's all he was. At least, this night he wasn't fooling; he was drinking.

"It's no good, Stella," he said. He never called her anything but Stella—not Stell, not dearest, not darling, no pet name, no diminutive, just Stella; but when he said it, it sounded like all the other lovely things. He had that voice to help him, too.

He took a quick drink. When he was really at it, he'd be talking to you, and before you knew it, half the bottle would be gone. But when he was in a poker game, every drink was like the opening of the House of Parliament, with a wet-lipped "A-a-g-h!" for obbligator.

"Everything, everything I do is wrong, Stella," he said. "Everything goes wrong. Everything I touch—everything I touch—turns to ashes."

"It's bad tonight, Clare," she said. "John called me, about Astra. He said it was the greatest exhibition he ever saw. He worships you—you know that."

"Not many people I like. Very fond of John. Good chap. Not my kind, don't you know. That's why I like him, I dare say."

"What do you mean, he is not your kind? Of course he is not your kind. Nobody is. You—you are by yourself. What do they say, in French? '*Hors concours*.' It means: *All alone*. It means, *without an equal*—I am so glad I went to a convent school. I learned to crochet, and to say my prayers in French, and a few French

words. They're awfully handy too, sometimes."

"That's not all you learned. . . . Ah, no, Stella, it would have made no difference where you went. You'd always have been beautiful. I—different standards, don't you know. Rather a rough—rather a rough life, you see. After I left my home, of course, that is."

Liar. Liar. It was the best chance he ever had, the best life he had ever known; and he was throwing it away, throwing it away.

"They have you down tonight, Clare." Suddenly her voice was a clanging gong. A good decent married woman can play Boadicea too, or Spartacus to the Gladiators. "All right. So they have you beat. You? Finish that bottle, finish another, or twenty, but don't talk nonsense—or talk another sort of nonsense. So, you lose the mare. John told me: everybody in the stables was talking about you, saying that you accomplished miracles."

"I—well, it was a near thing. A near thing. Just wasn't in the cards, I suppose. . . . Stella. You know, if it came to the worst—you know—if—Well, I'm no failure, don't you know; but—well, it's a hard thing to say, but what I am trying to say is—"

"Are you tired of me, Clare Sims? Is that what you are trying to say? Is it?"

"Oh. Oh. Almighty God! Forgive me, Stella. Tired of you, Stella? Why, old girl, you know—why, you upset me. I don't swear before you, you know. My language, my language at times is—is ungentlemanly; but not before you, I hope. Let us go to bed, shall we. After all, you see, it's only the end of Round Five. Clarence Leicester Sims is rather badly shaken—he's the bloke in the red tights—but he'll come up to the scratch, never fear, and Round Six will be a bit of all right, what?"

"You're the only one ever could make me laugh. I'm usually not good at jokes. I was always afraid you'd find out how stupid I am."

"You? Stupid? Well, bash me in the boko—it's a very low expression. It means: Not at all. Quite—let me see what you'd say. Oh, yes. 'Are you kidding?' That's it, isn't it?"

"That's close enough," she said. She held out her hand. "Come on. You've had enough, Clare."

"What a woman! Practically luring me. I have the best taste in women. Have I ever told you?"

OH, yes, they had their moments like that, maybe more of them than anyone knows. . . .

It may have been two, three years after this when her brother John came to her.

"Are you busy, Stell? Just stopped by for a drink."

"Early in the day, isn't it? How are you, John? Are you all right?"

"Stell—it's about Clare."

"Yes?"

"Stell—Clare is hitting it pretty hard. People are really beginning to talk."

"They have always talked about Clare."

"Sis, Clare—Clare is drinking, and he's—well, he is playing cards with the wrong sort of people."

Her laugh was hard and dry. "Clare isn't fussy," she said. "He can take care of himself. It isn't your little-boys' game, dollar limit with the members of the Turf Club, to pass the time. He isn't passing the time. Liquor is like food, to Clare. He can handle it."

"He is playing cards with—with scum. The scum of the town."

"Well. Well now, really! Anybody talking about you? You are thirty-seven years old, and you are still unmarried. There are really quite a few women in your life, aren't there? All high-class women, I suppose?"

"Oh. Like that, huh? Like that? That's nice. That's very nice! Never mind me or my women, please. I came here to talk about Clare."

"Then you be careful what you say."

"I'm not a careful man. But I am careful about my name, though you may not believe it. And I am careful about yours. You listen to me: Clare is a crook, a thief. He is pulling his own horses, betting against his own horses. Well, it may be his horses, but they are our silks. Our colors. Fifty years, we used those colors. They aren't going to be on a crooked jock's back, not any more. And I'm going to tell him so."

"John! John, Johnny, don't, don't go, don't leave me. Clare will kill you, or you'll kill him; and then—then where am I?"

"He won't kill me. I'll give him his chance, but he won't kill me."

"Ah, John, please, please! Get me a drink, honey, will you? I'm Sis, your little Sis. Get me a drink, please, will you, John?"

"Have you learned to drink too?"

"Oh, yes. Yes, I'm used to it. . . . Thank you."

SHE didn't touch the drink. "I know what you said." He could scarcely hear her. "I've known it for years. Lily Hastings came to me, and told me. I put her out. I told her to get out. I'll never speak to her again. Lily Hastings, the best woman friend I ever had. The best friend, the—the—"

"I know, Sis. I know, Stell. Take it easy."

"I know it. I was one of the first. I'll tell you how I know." Her voice was a dull, flat monotone. "It was that fire. That fire, at Rantoul."

"Rantoul," he said. "Oh. Oh, that I didn't know."

"Yes. The insurance people were pretty tough, and Clare was too ready to settle. You know why? The horses he claimed weren't in that stable."

"Sis—Sis, are you sure? Be careful what you say. That's—that's the worst, the worst. Defrauding an insurance company—they prove arson, that's a twenty-year stretch."

"They can't prove it. Clare is no bungler. Two years for fraud, maybe. . . . And then there was Downpatrick, at Pimlico, two years ago. Clare scratched him, wouldn't let him run. Scratched him!"

"He couldn't lose. Clare made twenty thousand dollars on that race, so Lily said. He had plenty of money right afterward, for a while. Then there was that mile, at Havre de Grace. Piute Queen was the hot favorite; she finished out of the mon-

ey. Piute Queen could have won that race running backwards. That thief Marsden was up that day. Marsden! When there is a dirty race, who rides it? Marsden. He rides it, and gets his cut, and then it's blackmail after that, blackmail, one way or another. I'm not telling you anything."

HE was silent, waiting for her.

"John—Clare is in this so deep, I don't know whether he can ever get out. . . . That bookie," Fritz Silber. You keep away from him; he's in every fix, every shady deal. Whenever Clare is working through him, it's crooked. It's crooked, and I know it. Clare is smart, John. He thinks ahead of you. He knows I have no use for Silber, and so he doesn't talk about him. But I know."

"Stell. . . . Stella, are you—are you—are you in on—"

"Stop. Don't you dare, don't you dare— Well. It's a fair question, I guess. No, Clare doesn't dream that I know."

"Stell. You'll have to quit Clare. You won't get a divorce, I know. But you can get a separation."

"No."

"You'll have to. We'll make you."

"Who'll make me? Who'll make me? 'Wives, obey your husbands.' That's what the Bible says. There is nothing in there about obeying you."

"Sis, do you love this—this—do you love Clare, Sis?"

"I don't know. I don't know. He's the only man I ever looked at, the only man I ever will look at. . . . Hah, he's the only man ever looked at me, too. But that—that doesn't matter, John. That isn't important."

"What do you mean, it isn't important? It's the only reason for sticking to this heel."

"Don't call names, please. Say 'Clare.' You see—you see, it's like this: Clare thinks he has me fooled. He has gone to all kinds of trouble to keep me fooled, told me lies, sent me here and there to get me out of the way. When he says Aiken, or Palm Beach, I know there is something doing. So I go, and he joins me there; and then there are more lies, more explanations. . . . John, he is near the end of his rope. He must know, he must know that more and more people know what he is. But there is me—me. He doesn't know that I know. . . . You and I, we believe in God. Clare, he doesn't believe in God. He doesn't even believe in his luck, any more. But he believes he has me kidded, fooled, that I trust him, that I haven't changed one bit since he married me. He thinks I'm stupid. I'm not very bright. It isn't hard for me to act stupid. If he loses me, I think he will lose the last thing in the world, the last thing that's left. I—I

am not that important to myself. What's my pride? It's been in the dust since Rantoul."

"Sis, listen! I won't see him. I'll write him a letter—a guarded sort of letter. I'll—I'll make a suggestion to him. I'll say: 'Sell out. Pick up what you can, pay your debts, and I'll lend you what I can. I'll stake you. Go out to Wyoming, or Colorado. Start a breeding farm, raise colts, keep out of the ring, out of the books.' I'll make it diplomatic, Sis. I'll just say: 'We know you're in deep, but we are with you. We are going to back your play, get you on your feet.' After all, he wasn't a bad fellow once, Stell."

She touched his hand. "No. Not yet. I tell you what: Wait—wait till after the meeting at the Downs. We have the best horse, the best horse alive today. Silver Star. Sure, she will be odds on—what of it? We'll get on her too, you and I, with whatever you can spare, and I, with every nickel I have in the world. We'll win that race, and we'll make Clare solvent, or else we will be broke, dead broke. What do you say?"

"That's my Sis," he said. "Shake! It's going to take a little doing. But Sis, you're wrong. Nobody's going to be odds on, in that scramble. They're betting on this one, from all over the country."

"We're betting on the tote figures. I won't have the money, unless it's in a legitimate book. It's the first bet I ever made, and it's going to be the last. I won't say a word to Clare. Get the girl up to the starting gate, and Kitty bar the door! We'll win, and we're square. If we're clean, we'll take your offer, on Wyoming."

"Sure. And if we lose, I'll have to go to work. This time, we make it or break it. One roll of the dice, and stay away, craps!"

"Hah! Natural!" she said, and threw her arms around him, and he roared at her, and patted her on the back.

IT was not a worse scheme than it may sound. Why, it was a good scheme, for sporting people. They didn't happen to know what the hitch in it was, what the gimmick was, the little trick, the little catch.

That was Clare Sims. He had his small, snide scheme.

He wasn't going to start Silver Star. He had his own arrangements, for that race. Silver Star wasn't going to run, if he had to destroy her with his own hand. In case of a scratch, all bets on that horse are off, and there was no winter book on this one. He had his ideas as to that race, once the real horse was out of it. The sad part of it is that even if he were right, he wouldn't have made a fortune, but

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only enough to keep his head above water for another little while.

Now, this is what happened:

The race was to be run on September 10. On August 27, Clarence L. Sims was shot and killed in a drunken argument, at the Hotel Montalorraine. The testimony of one Robert Gunsaulus, which was by no means his right name, at the Coroner's inquest is enlightening, and somewhat as follows:

"Mr. Gunsaulus, this poker game had been going on, you say, for two or three days?"

"Yes."

"The same players?"

"No. People would drop in and out. One would go out, another would come in."

"The game was for high stakes?"

Answer, with a shrug: "Well, yes. It was table stakes. Yes, it was a fairly big game."

"Now, the deceased, Sims, and the—ah—Colonel Clarke—they were playing constantly?"

"I couldn't say. They were there when it happened."

"Yes. One understands that. There was bad blood between the Colonel and Clare Sims?"

"I wouldn't put it just that way. I gamble with many people I don't like. This wasn't a friendly game, no. There's no friends in a card game."

THERE was some evidence of bad feeling between the Colonel and Clare Sims?"

"Well, there was a little needling, yes."

"Tell the court what the trouble was."

"Well, that is a little hard to say. If the Court will give me a little time, please?"

"Certainly. Take your time."

"Well, does the Court understand what a marker is?"

The court did not smile. "Tell the court about these markers."

"Well, a marker is like an I.O.U. In a big game, nobody carries that much cash. . . . Like, at the end of the game, I might have your markers, and you might have mine, and at the end, you would settle. Or maybe, you would give another marker. It is like poker chips, only these have a signature on them. At the end of the game, or whenever I quit, I might give a check, or a marker, if anybody would take it. I give checks."

"Yes, I see. Now, the Colonel and Clare Sims had exchanged markers?"

"How should I know? I was not the banker. In these games, there is no banker. The game banks itself. Cash, or markers."

"Well, tell us something about any conversation you remember between Colonel Clarke and Sims."



"That bookie, Fritz Silber, he's in every fix. Whenever Clare is working through him, it's crooked."

Answer: "Well, you understand, I am not keeping my mind on conversations. This—this game was not for peanuts."

"You were drinking?"

Answer: "In such games, I do not drink. Oh, I might take a drink, yes, but drink, no."

"Now, Mr. Gunsaulus, there was something said about a horse, a horse called Silver Star—"

Answer: "You will pardon me. Silver Star is a mare."

"Yes. The mare Silver Star. Does this help your memory at all?"

Answer: "Well, the Colonel, he said to Clare: 'How is your horse' (now you got me doing it), 'how is your mare Silver Star? I hear she's good thing for the Downs.' . . . Clare, he said: 'She better be good. I got my shirt on her.' And the Colonel, he said, later on, you understand, kind of needling him: 'Clare, if I was dead sure Silver Star was going to start at the Downs, and if I was dead sure she was going to be in shape, I would tear up your markers, and I'd pay mine, every one.' And Clare, he said: 'The mare will be in shape, and she will start, and she is going to win, too.' Then there was no more, for a while, because—well, what the Colonel has said is not such a nice thing to say to an owner, unless you are kidding. Well, maybe he was kidding, who knows?"

"You will explain that?"

Answer: "Well, you see, a horse could be scratched. Or even if he starts, he could be in bad shape."

"You mean he could be doped? Drugged?"

Answer: "Yes. I am not going to talk about a dead man, here, but—"

"Skip that, please. We know something about—about Mr. Sims' reputation. Now, as to the tragedy itself?"

Answer: "Well, they both sat out a hand or two, getting a drink. And Colonel Clarke—well, you see, Judge Martin and Mr. Fritz Silber, the bookie, are cutting high spade for a Big One—"

"Yes, yes. Go on, don't explain."

Answer: "Well, Colonel Clarke, he says: 'Come to think of it, Clare, I won't give you your markers back. I'll just keep them, and if Silver Star starts and even shows, I tear up your markers. And if not, then I go to your wife, Stella Montgomery, and say: 'Please take up these markers.'" And Clare, he says: 'You keep my wife's name out of this.' And the Colonel, he says: 'Don't get excited. Start the horse, and give us a square shake and a fair ride, and he has to show. Put a crooked no-good jock on him, and he loses. Fill him with the happy dust, and he loses. And I go to your wife, and I say: "Stella Montgomery you—" And then Clare calls him a name and goes for the roscoe. And

the Colonel, he shoots him through his pocket, and nobody would blame him, because that Clare, he didn't fool."

"That's all, Mr. Gunsaulus."

The verdict of the Coroner was self-defense. As a last gesture, all the players were indicted as common gamblers, and each got a sentence of ninety days.

White-faced and silent, John Montgomery sat through the inquest. He was, of course, not called upon to testify.

On a bright September day, a mare called Silver Star faced the barrier at the Downs. It was a barrier then; the present system is better in some ways, but the old one gave a resourceful jockey more of a chance.

A couple was seated near the rail of the clubhouse veranda. They showed little emotion, though her face was chalk-white, and he kept his hand on her arm. When Silver Star came mincing out of the paddock onto the brown track, the man's grip tightened:

"Here we go, Stell," he said.

"Look at her. Just look at her," she said. . . .

Silver Star won by a length and a half. It wasn't even close. When it was over, the rejoicing friends who crowded about them made way for another beautiful lady. "Stella, Stella!" she said. And they kissed and embraced. That was Lily Hastings, who had tried to tell her about Clare so long ago. They hadn't spoken since that time.

"We can leave any time, Stell," her brother whispered. "My boys have the tickets. They'll take care of everything. Sis, we couldn't even carry it. Two men could hardly carry it."

"After the fifth starts. We can't leave now. It wouldn't look right. . . . All our friends, Johnny. All our friends."

"Why sure, Sis. What did you expect? This—this is going to stop a lot of whispering in the back seats, this is. That's better than the money. Today that little mare was the greatest in the world. Wasn't even pressed. . . . Sis. Let's leave the car. One of the boys can pick it up. I—I don't want to drive, Stell. Not today. We get a cab, huh?"

"Yes. Take it easy, John. You look all right."

In the cab, he said: "Let me go home with you, Stell? Please! I need a couple of drinks. Haven't had one all day. Stell, got any idea how much we won?"

"It's enough. It's enough, that's all I care. I can take care of every nickel Clare owed. Everything we know about, that is."

"It's twice that much. Twice that much, and your own money back.

Sis, I got this before the race. Didn't want to upset you. It's—it's some of Clare's markers. It's from Clarke."

It was a small package with a rubber band around it, and a slip of paper bearing a scrawled memorandum to the effect that the enclosed had been paid in full. The signature was Colonel Clarke's. The I.O.U.'s had been torn across.

"Pay him, too," she said. "Every dime that Clare owed. They're not tearing up my husband's markers. Not with me, they're not."

"That's my girl," he said. "You can afford it, Stell."

He paid for the cab. "Come on in, Johnny," she said. Usually she called him John.

He had two quick drinks, and shuddered. "That's better. That's much better," he said.

"Help yourself, and sit down. . . . Don't drink that stuff that way. Can't you at least put a little soda in it?"

"You want one, Stell?"

"Plain ginger ale. A lot," she said.

THEY bowed, and drank to each other. "Now what, Sis?" he said.

"I don't know. I don't know. Something happened to me today. Maybe it was Lily Hastings. Maybe it was our friends. They've all been so decent to me. You—I don't count you. I always know, about you."

"Why, Stell—why, of course, Stell. Your own family, what would you expect?"

"I was going away. Now, I don't know. I was going to leave Maryland forever. But that's yellow. These are our home grounds. Fight it out here, I guess. . . . Can't you put that drink down for a second, please? Want to listen to a proposition?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"How much did you win, today?"

"Well—well, roughly—Sis, I have to tell you. I had the bank-roll on it, sure. But Stell, I—I played Silver Star across the boards. You see, just in case. I knew where you stood. If we lose, then you are clean, and I—I am not so good, either. So I figured—well, if the mare can show, even, we still have a few chips. Why, Sis, she paid three to five, to show."

"Oh, John, how could you? Betting that horse to show or place. Oh, John, you have no sense!"

"Don't you be hollering at me. Biggest killing I ever made. I got a little something, don't you worry. It's not what you have, no. But I'm well in the clear. What's your proposition? Still want to make it?"

"Yes. Sure, I'll make it. I don't copper. How'd you like to come in with me? Partners. You and I, this time. Put the stable on the map again."

"Stell—Stell—"



"And then Clare calls him a name; and the Colonel shoots Clare through his pocket."

"Wait a minute. There's a string to it. You have to promise not to make a bet on a race, while we are together. Can you do it? I won't have it any other way. Isn't a stable bad enough? Clare had bad breaks. He worked hard; nobody ever worked harder. There never was a braver man in the world. Betting ruined Clare. You know that. Listen: we are going after the big stakes, the colts, the yearlings. Our own stock! No money with the books, not a penny. And we are going to retire Silver Star. She's run her

"Montgomery Stables, huh? Montgomery Stables, one more time—and this time, for keeps."

"No: Montgomery and Sims. I'm Sims; don't you forget it. His name goes on, or I won't touch this. He tried hard enough to protect my name—our name. He did it in a bad way, yes, but he died doing it. Never mind

comes first. 'Sims and Montgomery.' What do you say?"

"Shake," she said. It was the only agreement they ever had, the only one they ever needed. . . .

All this was long ago. Most of them have gone away, now, to continue their careers, maybe to find better ones, in a place where we'll all have a chance at a new tomorrow. . . . No; Stella didn't marry again. The swans mate once, so they say, and they also tell us they sing once, before they die. Meantime they continue, graceful and serene, and leave us all a pretty picture to admire and remember.

The Sims-Montgomery Stable has kept its colors flying for many and many a year. When you see those silks



last race. Let her retire, have a family."

"No. No, we won't. No, I tell you. She's game, and she's entitled to her chance. Next year, maybe. That's time enough. As for the rest of it, you're on. Anyhow, what would I have to bet with? Because I'd have to put in dollar for dollar, with you."

"WILL you hush? You, you were always so hard to get along with. . . . All right, all right. Have it your own way."

that. Don't you say he was no good. He was good. He was proud of my name; well, I'm proud of his. His name is not going to be forgotten, I tell you. It's going to be known, to be known when his—his hard luck, his mistakes—"

"Ah, Stell, Stell, don't, don't! The first time, the first time you broke! Stop it. Stop it. I won't let you break. You got me, you got me all the time. Have it your own way. I'll do what you want. 'Sims and Montgomery,' how's that? Lady's name

flashing in the sun, put a little bet down if you're the gambling kind. The owners don't bet. The owners don't bet; it's still a rule, with them. Their jockeys ride straight for the wire. Don't buy their yearlings; they keep the good ones for themselves. What's more, they'll tell you so. They're not in it for peanuts, nor small side-bets. They're not interested in if-money. They're after the big stakes, all the time.

There is no finer name than theirs, in the State of Maryland.



The Cossack River

Two strange Russians had been reported near the uranium fields north of Athabaska; and it was up to Sergeant Ritchie to find out about them. He did it by buying a wife.

THE plane had put down on the lonely sub-Arctic river and started taxiing toward the big willow-grown island in midstream. Through the co-pilot window Mounted Sergeant Ritchie was looking ahead at the summertime camp of the Sakhashta Indians and noticing, with puzzled eyes, the lack of any welcome or friendliness from the band. Nobody was coming down the landwash to meet him, nobody called or waved, no canoe was pushing off to take him ashore.

A sort of specialist in handling Indian affairs, the quiet, veteran sergeant had visited the mountain-lost

tribe on several occasions, for merely routine reasons, and his visits had gone smoothly enough, but all the signs told him that this time, when his business was top-drawer, something was badly off key.

The thirty-odd skin tents of the Sakhashtas, along with their cooking pits and fish-drying frames, were scattered across a bare gravel terrace at the upper end of the island, where the wind helped keep the mosquitoes and brûlé flies away. When the plane had circled over the camp a few minutes ago, Ritchie had seen children playing along the landwash, women talking around the fires, and canoes

tending the fish weirs in the shoals upstream; but now the whole place was suddenly, strangely hushed.

It was eleven o'clock of the summer evening, and the sun was just inching out of sight in the north-northwest. In the deep river valley the midnight dusk was beginning to gather but the slant sunshine still glittered and flared on the glaciers and high snowfields of the Cossack Range. The jumble of trackless mountains, with their massive peaks, long avalanche paths and hundred white-water creeks stairstepping down from the ice caps, looked so wild that even Duke Lindstrum, an experienced bush-pilot of the North,



"We've turned the country upside down looking for those two agents, but no dice," said Ritchie.

from anything I ever saw among our Smokies back on the Liard or the Mackenzie."

The Sakhasas, Ritchie explained, really belonged over on the coast. They'd been conquered by the early fur traders, generations ago, and kicked around pretty badly, and they had a noticeable strain of white blood in them from those years of their enslavement. Finally they had escaped across the mountains to this valley, and ever since then they'd not had much use for white people.

He threw out the anchor and hung the fluke in the gravel bottom. As he fastened the rope to a metal brace inside the cabin, Lindstrum asked him: "Why aren't you tying that to a pontoon strut outside?"

"If you should have to leave here on the jump, by yourself," Ritchie pointed out, "you could just slash the anchor rope and get gone."

"What's that? Hey! Are you expecting trouble here, fellow?"

"If you mean gun trouble or such-like, no. I'm acquainted with most of these Sakhasa men and I've been friends for years with old Alec, their *tyee*. But they haven't got any welcome mat out this time, for some reason, and it's just as well to play things safe."

The tousle-headed Duke looked at him mystified. "See here, Noel, what's this trip all about, anyhow? Don't tell me it's just a check-up visit. I know better."

RITCHIE answered this reluctantly; back at Fort Athabwan on the Liard he had told Lindstrum almost nothing about their trip, but now the uncertainty of what he might meet ashore forced his hand.

"This has got to be confidential, Duke, and I don't mean somewhat. You remember, early in May this spring, the week of bad williwaws we had? During that spell a long-range plane sneaked in over the coast, from the direction of the Pribilofs, and dropped off some specially trained men at key places here in the Northwest. Eight men, two to a place, with plenty of bribe money and gewgaws for potlatch. The Yanks rounded up four of 'em and the Police two more, but we've turned the country upside down looking for those other two, but no dice. A hunt like that means a lot of work and trouble, but those two agents are dangerous and we can't quit till we get 'em. A few days ago we heard a rumor, our only lead to

Mystery

by WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY

was glancing around with surprise and awe.

"Jerusalem, Noel!" He turned to Ritchie. "It's strictly man country, he-man country, back in here. Talk about a thousand miles from nowhere—this is it, in boots and whiskers."

In his silent way Ritchie nodded, but he was thinking gloomily that Cossack River might have been remote enough in the yesteryear of canoe and dog team but its isolation was a dead pigeon now. By warplane the valley was only sixty minutes from the Alaska coast, and less from the Alcan Road. It was like a gateway to the new, rich uranium fields north of Athabaska,

and a window on the maneuvers of the Canadian and American air squadrons guarding the Northwest.

As the plane came within rifleshoot of the camp, he reached back into a cubby for the anchor and coil of rope. "I can wade ashore from here, Duke." He pushed open the cabin door and stepped down onto a pontoon. "You're to stay with the plane."

Lindstrum cut the engine, and the Diomedes glided on a little way. In the quiet Lindstrum remarked, staring curiously at the camp: "These Sakhasas are a funny-looking outfit, Noel. Anyhow, those dinky leather tents and stubby canoes are different

date, that they were planted here with the Sakhas-tas."

The pilot whistled. "Great Jerusalem! D'you really think the beggars are here?"

"That's the sixty-four-dollar question."

"But why didn't you bring some men along to help nail 'em? Why'd you come back in here by yourself?"

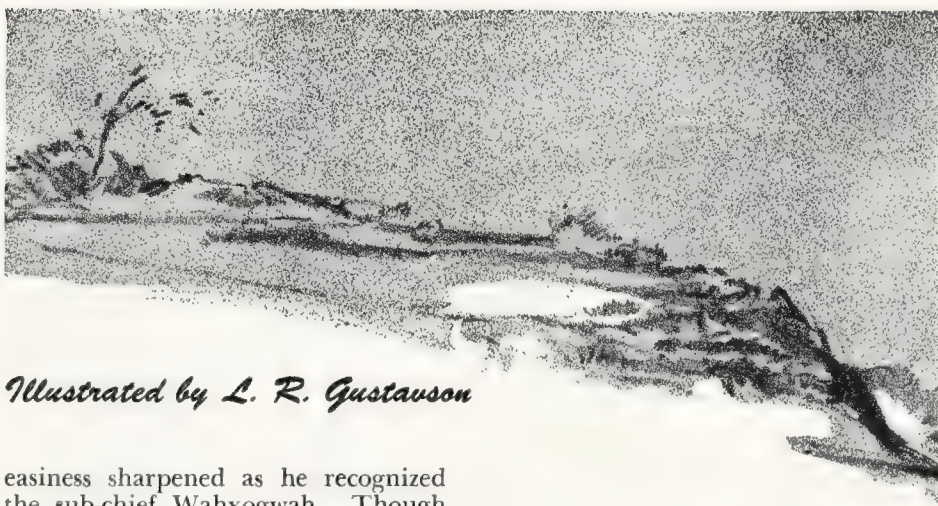
"Nailing 'em will come later," Ritchie said. "Before you nail 'em you've got to find 'em. That's my job—just finding out on the q.t. if they're here or not." He stepped off the pontoon into the cold, hip-deep water. "So I'm going ashore, and don't you go to sleep out here—and we'll see what happens."

As Ritchie tramped out onto the landwash, his boots sloshing and his trouser legs clinging wetly, he was planning on a good look-see around the Indian camp. The two agents—if they were there—had crawled into a hole, no doubt, but a person probably could spot some of that potlatch junk. But his best bet, he believed, would be a talk with old Alec. He liked the old *tyee* and knew Alec trusted him, and the chief always acted wisely for his little band. Besides, Alec himself had put aside some of the tribal grudge against whites, even to allowing the mission at Athabwan to take his granddaughter for schooling.

Ritchie headed up the landwash toward the camp; still no one appeared, and this ended his last linger of hope for a friendly welcome. When he was with the plane there had been a chance that the Sakhas-tas had seen only that he was a Mounted Policeman, a "horseman-without-a-horse," as the Indian joke had it. But now they couldn't fail to see that he was their former visitor and friend, the particular Policeman they called "the-three-striped-horseman-without-a-horse-in-the-white-green-cabin-without-a-squaw."

Without-a-squaw hush seemed to him as though the Sakhas-tas didn't want anybody nosing around there because they were harboring those two "illegal entries." And yet he remembered that just after the break-up six-weeks ago the four Sakhas-ta men who had come in to Athabwan to trade, bringing the tribe's winter take of peltry, had bought only bedrock necessities: a little ammunition, salt and painkiller, a few replacement axes, steel traps and such-like. After several straight years of low fur prices the band was desperately poor, and wouldn't they have used some of the bribe money—if the two aliens were there—to buy needed gear and supplies?

When he was halfway to the camp a man came out of a lodge and walked down toward him, and Ritchie's un-



Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

easiness sharpened as he recognized the sub-chief Wahxogwah. Though a capable person and admittedly the man to succeed old Alec, the sub-chief was a cold, hard, cagey individual.

The Indian stopped on a hump of wind-drift sand, and Ritchie walked on up. Taller and heavier than the sergeant but a couple of years short of Ritchie's thirty-five, the sub-chief halted squarely in the path, and there was about him an air of "this far and no farther."

With only a curt nod of greeting the Indian demanded, in labored English: "Why you come here?"

Ritchie played his answer close to the vest. With a shrug that veiled the importance of his business he said, "Last fall I promised *Tyee* Alec I would visit him again in this Moon-of-Little-Night." He slapped his wet trouser legs. "I'm surprised to find that the Sakhas-ta canoes all have holes in the bottom. When the Sakhas-ta men came out to Athabwan to trade, my teapot had no holes in the bottom—or my flour sack, or my wooden bucketful of many-colored gumdrops."

His thrust made Wahxogwah wince—inhospitality was a shameful thing in Indian eyes. But with no apology, or any explaining, the sub-chief pointed a finger at the plane. "Go back to the flying canoe. Go back home."

Ritchie snubbed his anger at the blunt order. "Don't let this fellow start any trouble," he warned himself. "Trouble would spoil everything." But the order did upset his plans and also it hurt. Secretly he had become fond of the Sakhas-tas because of their independence and their refusal to take treaty dole, and he had befriended them in many ways. Now all his patient diplomacy with them was ending up with his getting thumbed out of camp.

It was plain that since his visit last fall something had happened to cause this baffling hostility, and the only explanation he could think of was those two agents. Their sort was expert at stirring up trouble and bad

blood. Yet he could not be dead sure, and he swore in exasperation as he looked at the skin tents just up the path and wondered if those two were there or not.

Without having to be told, he knew that Wahxogwah was not going to allow him in the camp, and he tried his other move. "I've got business with Alec. It's something we talked about last fall. Go tell the *tyee* I've come."

Wahxogwah eyed him a moment, debating. Then the Indian pointed across the island at a solitary tent that sat on the channel bank a hundred yards below the camp.

The meaning of that lone lodge jarred Ritchie all through. His eyes came back to Wahxogwah and he asked, "Dead?"

The Indian reached for a willow twig and broke it between his fingers till only a thin, weak shred of bark was holding. Slowly Ritchie nodded, and said: "I'll go and see him. I should have visited here sooner."

He turned and started across the island. Wahxogwah followed, a dozen yards behind, watching him.

THE sides of the tent were rolled up partway. He saw that someone was sitting with the *tyee* and guessed it was old Alec's granddaughter, T'hesseepeh, whom everybody at Athabwan called Tessy. He had often heard her speak affectionately of her *gran'père* and he knew it would be like her, while the rest of the camp went its usual round, to stay there with him in the lodge by the darkening river.

When he was a few yards from the tent, T'hesseepeh got up, came out and moved away up the river bank. A slim, pretty girl of eighteen, with dark brown eyes and a telltale waviness in her dark hair, she was still wearing the belted corduroy dress and brown shoes which the mission at Athabwan had given her as a "going-home present" six weeks ago when



"Go back to the flying canoe. Go back home," Wahxogwah emphasized.

the four men brought her back to the tribe.

Ritchie said quietly, "Hello, Tessy," and expected her to stop and talk with him a minute. But instead, T'hessepeh merely bent her head to him respectfully, then went on up the bank beyond earshot and sat down on a sand drift. Ritchie understood why she had left the tent; it was custom for a girl or woman to efface herself when men talked. But he was remembering her at Athabwan—the pert little thing he had once spanked for raiding his strawberry patch, and the attractive, sunny-hearted girl he occasionally had danced with at the Bay sociables; and now it shocked and saddened him to

see that in a few short weeks the high-spirited Tessy had been changed into this stoical, submissive T'hessepeh.

Afraid that he had come too late, he stooped through the flap-front and looked down at the gaunt figure on the pallet. For a few moments he was swept with pity and sorrow, and it came home to him that he was losing a long-time, helpful friend and the band was losing a wise, unselfish leader. Not many men he had known were as kindly and honorable as old Sakhasta Alec.

The old headsman seemed to be dozing. Ritchie crouched down by the pallet, trying to put aside his personal feelings in favor of the business

in hand. After waiting a couple of precious minutes, he touched the chief's shoulder and said: "Alec! This is Ritchie, Sergeant Ritchie. Try to talk with me a little bit, won't you?"

Old Alec opened his eyes. "Good, good you come." He spoke in a low mutter, with great difficulty, but his welcome was warm and genuine. He rested a few seconds and then asked, "You remember—your last coming—our talk about the sand cradles?"

Ritchie interrupted, to save the old *tyee's* strength. "Yes, yes, I remember. You wanted me to see about getting five tomrockers for your band, so's the men could pan some gold in summer here along Cossack River. You figured it would help make up for the low peltry prices, and also it was bad for your men to be idle from snow to snow." He thought it was typical of the old fellow to be worrying, in this last hour of his life, about the welfare of his little band. "That's all been tended to, Alec. There were delays but the tomrockers will be at Athabwan in a couple of weeks now."

"Good, good."

Ritchie hated to press him but he could see that the thread of willow bark was very thin indeed and might part at any time.

"Alec," he said, speaking slowly, "listen to me. This spring, in the Moon-of-Wolves-Whelping, did two white strangers show up at your winter camp, with money and potlatch, and make friends with the Sakhasas?"

The old Indian did not answer. He seemed to be thinking or dozing off again. Ritchie picked up one of the bony hands from the wolf-skin coverlet and roused him. "Alec, you've got to tell me about this. I've got no other way to find out. Wahxogwah won't talk or even let me into the camp. Just say yes or no. Those two men the Police want, are they here?"

For a good half-minute old Alec lay silent, looking out across the river. Finally he said: "No. The men—not here."

It was a flat-out answer and ordinarily Ritchie would have believed it without question. In their various dealings he had never known the old *tyee* to lie to him or speak one deceitful word. But this answer left him unsatisfied. Why, he wondered, had Alec hesitated over that simple yes or no?

He said diplomatically: "It could be, Alec, that your memory just now isn't too clear, and won't you think about my question again? You don't want your people to get into trouble, and I don't want it either, but they're going to find themselves in bad trouble if they're harboring those slinkers and don't give 'em up."

With a great effort Alec struggled to an elbow and said emphatically: "The two Kossackee—I say—not here! My people—hiding nobody."

Ritchie stiffened a little. Kossackee—how on earth would Alec have known that, unless—

But again he could not be dead sure. It was possible that Alec had used the word merely as a figure of speech, denoting anybody the Police wanted or any men of criminal sort. It could be that the term, like some other Sak-hasta expressions, went back to that bitter long-ago of the tribe's enslavement, when the Czars held all western

If T'hesseepah was crying, she surely had plenty of reason to.



America down to California and the cruelties of the Cossack *promyshleniki* (fur collectors) were burned unforgettably into the tribal memory.

Exhausted by this little flare-up, Alec sank back on the pallet, his strength flickering so low that Ritchie doubted if the old chief would speak again. He felt he ought to get up and leave so that T'hesseepah could be there in the tent for what little time remained. But he made himself stay on, hoping for some stray word or hint.

As he waited, glancing occasionally through the flap-front at the patient T'hesseepah, he thought about the girl's long, teen-age years at Athabwan and the completely different life she had got used to, and he knew very well that behind her mask of silent acquiescence she was bewildered and miserable. He told himself angrily that she shouldn't have been taken out to the mission at all if she was to be brought back to the tribe like this. During those Athabwan years she had become a white girl in all the ways that counted, and now she found herself back in the primitive camp and hopelessly stuck there. It seemed to him that she was wearing the mission shoes and dress, so out of place in that camp, as a sort of desperate clinging to the better life she had known.

It surprised him, after several minutes of silence, to see old Alec rouse himself and make a resolute effort to talk once more. As though the word "Kossackee" had touched off something deep, the old fellow's mind was running on those days when his people had been the proud and numerous "Sea Otters" of the coast. In spite of his impatience Ritchie listened, patching together the slow, halting words.

The Sakhastas, Alec said, had been kind and trusting when the Kossackee first appeared. They fed and sheltered the white strangers from across the Smoking Sea, and foolishly they believed the Kossackee lies against the King George men and the Boston men, who were trying to push the Kossackee back to their own land. As soon as the Kossackee were strong enough, they killed all the Sakhasta chiefs and councilors; they seized all war weapons in the villages; they forbade any visiting with the neighboring Thlingits and Aleuts; they destroyed all the totems and ceremonial lodges of the ancestral sea-gods and instead put up images everywhere of their ruler, whom they spoke of as a kind of god. And all the furs, gold, hides and ivory they forced the Sakhastas to gather were shipped back to their homeland.

Ritchie, listening, thought sardonically: "Hmph, the more it changes, the more it's the same ugly thing." In

its main lines old Alec's account of that other century was like an echo of the news he heard night after night on the radio.

He tried to figure why Alec was telling him all this. Somehow he had the impression that the old *tyee* wanted to win his understanding and sympathy for the Sakhastas. But why? The thought occurred to him, sudden and startling, that maybe those two agents had indeed showed up at the winter camp and been recognized as Kossackee, and the Sakhastas had killed them out of hand. Maybe old Alec, afraid that this would eventually be discovered by the Mounted, was trying to enlist his good offices so that the tribe would not be punished too harshly.

"Alec," he said, "let's not bother about those old times now. Let's talk about—"

Alec did not seem to hear. With his last wisp of strength he went on telling about those years of the Kossackee rule and how finally a remnant of the Sakhastas managed to break away and escape across the mountains. Later it was heard that the Kossackee were gone from the land. Their cruelties had made all men hate them, and they even distrusted and hated one another; and that was why their evil rule, which seemed so strong, had fallen apart like a rotting *ooniak*. So in the end the King George men and the Boston men had pushed them back across the Smoking Sea.

"But the two Kossackee this spring," Ritchie insisted, after a silence. "Did they come to your camp, Alec? What happened with that pair?"

The old *tyee* failed to answer. He seemed to be looking out above the river at the mountains of the north-northwest, where the lofty peaks were rimmed with gold from the hidden sun. Ritchie waited, waited, till the silence began to alarm him.

"Alec, about those men. Tell me—" He broke off and bent down closer. "Alec!"

HE sat by the pallet for a little time afterward, watching the dusky, whispering river and thinking hard. One thing was plain: both of his plans had failed, his excuses had run out, and when he left the tent he would have to go straight back to the Diomedes and leave, with that tormenting question unanswered—unless he could come up with some further move.

In his own mind he felt positive now that the Sakhastas did have some connection with the two aliens. The unexplained hostility, old Alec's story and several small, intangible hints all pointed to that. And his hunch that the men had showed up there and been "liquidated" seemed to him the full answer, the inevitable answer.

Ritchie wondered when it would ever end. He realized that Wahxogwah was exacting an extortionate price from him.



But he realized he had no hard evidence to back up this guess and furthermore would never get any such evidence. In all likelihood the Sak-hastas had carefully destroyed the potlatch, bribe money and everything else that might link them with the killing. No, he couldn't go back and report a mere hunch. That wouldn't close out the long hunt. Those two characters had to be nailed or definitely accounted for. . . .

When he finally got up and went out of the tent, he saw Wahxogwah waiting a few rods away to escort him back across the island. T'heseepch looked up inquiringly and at his sorrowful nod she lifted her *onehkeeseh* (maiden) shawl over her head and shoulders. If she was crying, Ritchie thought, she surely had plenty reason. Since her return to the tribe indulgent old Alec had undoubtedly shielded her from being married against her will, but that time of grace was ended now. There'd be the usual talk-meeting in the men's *kozgee*, she'd be allotted to the most suitable claimant, and she'd go to that man's lodge willy-nilly.

With no attempt to comfort or befriend her, he turned away and walked over toward Wahxogwah, getting him-

self in hand for the gamble he had decided to make. It was a dangerous and uncertain play, costly to himself personally, but he saw no other move.

Deliberately trying to puzzle Wahxogwah, he said: "I couldn't finish business with old Alec; he was too far gone. You're now the *tyee* here, so I'll finish it with you. That is"—he shrugged—"if you want to go through with the deal."

Wahxogwah studied him warily and finally grunted "*Mebbe*," refusing to admit that he was entirely in the dark about the "deal."

STILL poker-faced, Ritchie went on: "Alec and I agreed on part of the price. I said I'd pay for those tom-rockers and turn 'em over to you people. Besides that, he mumbled something about wanting new fish nets, some rifles, traps and other things."

As he had thought, his mention of the badly needed equipment hooked Wahxogwah's interest. But still the Indian cagily said nothing.

Ritchie glanced at his watch. "Let's get this thing over with, one way or other, and I'll be starting back to Athabwan. There's nothing else to tend to here; no sickness, no debts with the Indian agency, no peltry to

stamp, or stuff like that." He waited a couple of seconds to let this point sink in. Then he casually played his main card, and a wild one he knew it was: "Now, about this business. Don't think that just because I need a squaw I'll pay any price you ask. This was old Alec's idea in the first place, more than mine. He talked around about it for a couple of hours last fall. Said she wouldn't be contented back here now and would be better off among my people. Said he would keep her an *onehkeeseh* till I came this summer and told him yes or no."

At any other time he would have been amused at Wahxogwah's startled grunt. He could understand the Indian's astonishment. All along Wahxogwah had been sure that the Police visit concerned those missing men, and might mean arrests and punishment; and now it suddenly turned out that the visit was just to see about buying a squaw.

"What's the matter?" Ritchie asked Wahxogwah. "If you don't want to dicker, just say so. As far as I'm concerned she's got her good points"—he jerked a thumb at T'heseepch—"but she's got some bad ones too. It all depends on how many rifles, nets,

traps and so on you ask for her. You want to talk?"

"Mebbe."

Ritchie crouched down, smoothed off a patch of sand and drew a circle in it. Then, as Wahxogwah crouched down facing him, he broke a willow stick into five short pieces and laid them inside the ring. "That's the tomrockers," he said. "Now the fish nets: Two new ones, same size and kind as the old one you've got now, ought to be enough. All right?"

Wahxogwah nodded. Ritchie found two small strips of willow bark, laid them in the circle and hurried on to steel traps. In the Indian's hard, wary eyes he could detect a suspicion of this whole deal, and he drove the bargaining along at a fast clip. The sooner he could get T'hessepeh into the plane and get gone, the better.

"You need about five tens of steel traps of a size for wolf and beaver," he said, "and about ten tens of a size for muskrat and mink."

Wahxogwah shook his head. "Need more. Need twice what you say." He reminded Ritchie: "She is healthy, strong. Can work. Good teeth."

"Her teeth aren't any point with me," Ritchie argued. "In the white man's lodge leather isn't chewed soft by the squaws." But he gave in to the demand rather than waste time.

They went on to iron cooking-pots. Then Wahxogwah wanted flashlights for the long winter dark, tea and salt and a couple of medicines, canvas for canoes, a bolt of cloth, skinning knives, axes. . . . Ritchie wondered when it would ever end. He was keeping rough track of the total and knew it stood around eight hundred dollars already, with the most expensive item still to come. But he went steadily on with his gamble, haggling a little when he could and giving in when he had to. He realized Wahxogwah was exacting an extortionate price from him, and he saw his savings from several years of his skimpy Police pay melting away, but he kept telling himself grimly that the fatter the bait the less danger the Indian would back out of the deal.

THEY came at last to the rifles. Ritchie picked up six pebbles and put them in the circle. Wahxogwah's "No!" was sharp and hard. He added pebbles one by one till he had a dozen in the pile.

"You don't need that many for meat hunting," Ritchie insisted. He took four of the pebbles and put them back outside the circle. The guns they were talking about, high-power repeaters for caribou and moose, would stand him at least seventy-five dollars apiece.

"She is young," Wahxogwah observed, and put the pebbles back in-

side the ring. "She will be full of nature. Like the doe in fall."

"For me she's too young," Ritchie countered. "She will make eyes at all the young *métis* boatmen of the Liard, and I'll have to beat her." He took one pebble from the circle. "She may even run off with another man. White squaws sometimes do that." He removed another pebble. "That's all I'll pay. Ten."

Wahxogwah studied him a moment, then confidently put the two pebbles back into the ring. "That many or no sell. Also, two boxes cartridges with each gun." The faint grin seemed to say that a white man when he wanted a squaw was like a canoe caught in wild river waters.

Ritchie silently cursed him. It was a galling price and the grin was galling. But he let Wahxogwah have his triumph, and nodded.

ON the landwash Ritchie stopped T'hessepeh as she was about to step into the water. "No, don't," he said. "Don't get the pretty dress and shoes wet. I'll carry you out to the plane." And he thought to himself that this would afford Wahxogwah another laugh—a man carrying his squaw instead of making her wade.

With his burning question still unanswered, he picked T'hessepeh up and started out through the shallows. It was getting toward one o'clock and the dusk was fading out of the valley as the sunlight broadened on the high snowfields. The inane thought crossed his mind, as he shifted T'hessepeh more comfortably in the saddle of his arm, that she stood him a good fifteen dollars a pound, and hardly a Chinaman's chance to get any of it repaid from Police funds. How would it look on Contingency Form E-37—"One (1) Sakhasta girl, \$1876.29"? How could he explain that when all other ways were blocked he had bought her on the gamble that she had information which would end the long man-hunt? How could he possibly explain to some official in far-off Ottawa how he had felt about a stoically silent, uprooted Indian girl sitting on a sand drift in the whip-poorwill dusk?

He knew she was bewildered at his buying her for his squaw, and he wanted to clear her up on that forthwith. "Right now, Tessy," he said as he waded along, "I can't explain much about this deal I made. Just that I'm taking you back to Athabwan and your old friends. Between Sister Thérèse and myself and the rest of 'em, we'll see that you make out fine. You understand, of course, that I had to tell Wahxogwah I was buying you; he wouldn't have understood anything else. But you and I'll just be good friends, the same as before."

Lindstrum had got up the anchor and was poling the *Diomedé* in to meet them. Ritchie glanced back ashore and saw nobody except Wahxogwah, walking up to the camp. He knew then there would be no trouble getting gone, and he held off his question no longer.

"Look, Tessy: When you belonged back there you weren't free to talk. But now you are free. The thing I want to know about happened last spring but I'm sure your *gran'père* Alec and others told you all about it. Everybody knew. That's one reason Wahxogwah wouldn't let me in the camp. This concerns two men, Tessy; men of the blood your *gran'père* called Kossackee. You know about them, don't you?"

Tessy was silent. Ritchie felt her squirm uneasily, torn between old loyalties and the new. He urged: "Remember, you're a white girl now. Those two did show up at the winter camp, didn't they?"

Reluctantly she nodded. "Yes, Sergeant Ritchie, they did. It was during that time of the bad winds and snows."

Ritchie drew a great breath of relief. "I knew it. I could smell it. But then what happened, Tessy?"

She did not answer, and again he felt her squirm uneasily. He said: "I know how you feel. You don't want your people—the Sakhas, I mean—to be punished. Well, I won't lie to you. The Police will have to take some sort of action about it. But I'll be concerned in that, and I'll repeat the story your *gran'père* told me; and I don't think they'll be punished very hard. So tell me—the Sakhas did put those men away and destroy all their potlatch and money, didn't they?"

"Yes, Sergeant Ritchie. They had a big meeting in the *kozgee* and everybody was thinking about that other time, long ago, when the Kossackee came, and so—"

"Quite!" Ritchie said, and a mountain rolled off his shoulders. "Thanks, Tessy. I'll buy you something nice for this—if I've got any money left."

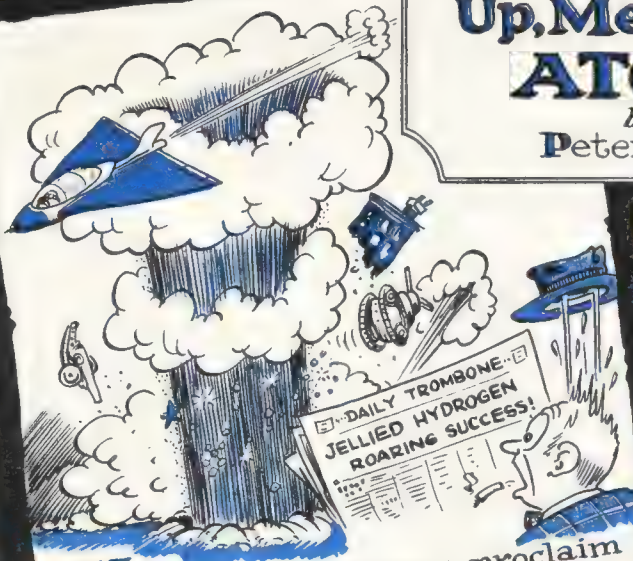
WHEN they reached the plane he handed Tessy to Lindstrum and then climbed up onto a pontoon. Lindstrum helped her on up into the cabin and turned to him.

"Name of Jerusalem, man, what goes on—you coming back with that armful of April dusk? You find out anything about that pair of Commies? They land here?"

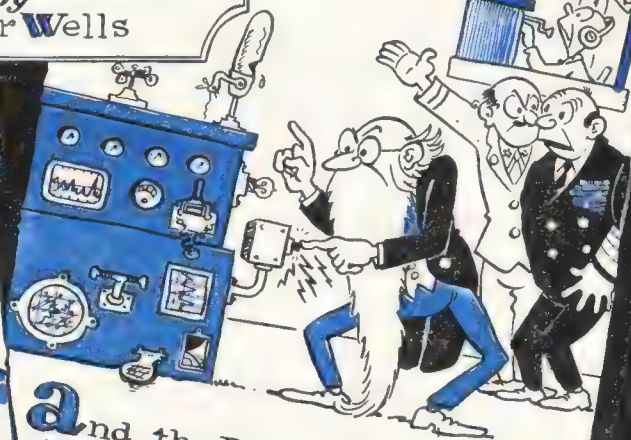
Ritchie nodded, squeezing the water from his trouser legs. "The hunt's all over, Duke. Yes, those two did land here. But it was a bad place for that pair to land. Definitely a very bad place."

Up, Men, and ATOM!

by
Peter Wells



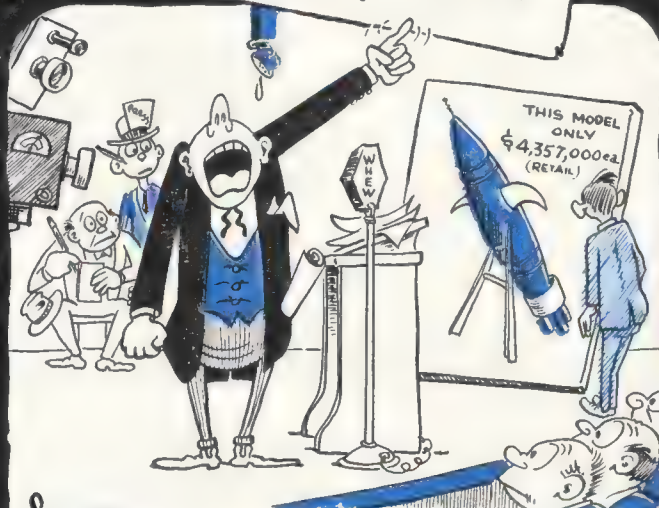
While the newspapers proclaim our new, supersonic Weapons in thundering headlines daily...



And the Radio assures us that push-button Warfare is with us for sure...



Television goes even farther, and shows us daring Adventurers who blast off to battle in *Outer Space*...



& Politicians in crises promise even more startling Inventions {and Taxes}! Let our Enemies beware!



It's really amazing how there can always be one skeptical dog-face who doesn't get the Word !!



Mountain Miracle

When Sir Dinadan and Sir Gareth won back to Camelot from the adventure of the perfidious damosel, and King Arthur knew the young knight of Dinadan's making for a son of his beloved sister Queen Elizabeth of Orkney, great was the rejoicing, many were the feasts and flings of celebration. But these did not satisfy Arthur; so he conceived a tournament and games that would make a mere poppy show of anything of the sort ever seen before in this realm. And to give all lovers of hard knocks and high jinks plenty of time in which to assemble, he ordained it to begin on St. Michael's Feast and to continue a sennight and a day; and to this end he sent trusty heralds in every direction throughout his realm and beyond it, and beyond Cornwall into Wales and even to Ultima Thule, and by ships to Ireland and Brittany.—The Book of Maelor.



NOW Sir Dinadan was in clover again, and even deeper than ever before, having received a fat purse from King Arthur in addition to an honest price for the spoils of his spear and sword. And now he had no other mouth or back dependent upon him save those of his loved charger Garry, (unless you count the dozen and more cripples and blind beggars who clustered about his lodgings whenever he was in town), for he had not employed a squire since homesick young Victor had left him and returned to Castle Fergus. Now he engaged the two best rooms at his inn, and the best of the stabling there for Garry, and a groom for each. He gave doles daily to his clamorous almsfolk, and bonuses every Sunday. He had a hairdresser in every morning to comb and curl his ringlets, and a barber to razor his cheeks and chin. He called a skilled limner in to repaint the rampant uni-

corn on his shield. He got his lutes out of pawn and had them restrung, and looked to the refurbishing of his wardrobe.

Now Dinadan lived in the manner he would liefest of all others in this world. On fine days he rode Garry abroad for an hour or two after breakfast, and again after dinner, but lightly, and both horse and man lightly housed in silk and velvet instead of leather and iron. Sometimes he played at pall-mall, or skittles, or shuttlecock, with other agile gentlemen of the court, and with noble dames and damosels and maybe a few queens looking on and applauding. But he sat at home in his lodgings a few hours every day, and many hours in foul weather, making new songs, both the words and the tunes, and writing the words on parchments and trying the tunes with voice and lute. And almost every evening he supped at some high table, and as often as not treated the company to music

by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

Illustrated by JOHN FULTON



AN ABLE KNIGHT WITH SPEAR AND SWORD, SIR DINADAN PROVES THAT HE ALSO CAN STRUM A BOOMING HARP. BUT WITH THE LADIES—AH, THERE WAS A PROBLEM!

after meat: but not always, for his moods were not as constant as was his appetite for good victuals and drink.

So Dinadan supped one muggy July night, after a day of rain and song-making, with a witty dowager duchess who was one of his oldest and merriest friends. Feeling in a low mood and spent after his day-long battle of rhymes, he was somewhat set back to find a full score of company, and strangers amongst them, instead of a dozen, and all familiars. But at the thought that the hostess had the best cook and the best cellar in Camelot, as well as the liveliest wit, and that his sure friend young Sir Gareth sat just across the board from him, he took heart.

WHEN the sounds of spooning and supping and all sorts of bowl and trencher action were past, and even the clattering and gurgling of cups and cans and bottles a little reduced, a large stranger—strange to Dinadan,

at least—called loudly and right assuredly for a song.

"Now for a song, Duchess—a ditty of love to a merry tune!" he bellowed like a bull. "Now for this tame poet I have heard about! Bid him sing for us now, fair hostess!"

He was a big man around as well as up and down, and richly dressed and bearded, and he sat at the dowager Duchess' right hand. The lady cried "O fie!" and plucked him by a sleeve and whispered in his ear.

"Ho!" he exploded. "Ho-ho! Temperamental, hey?"

SHE plucked and whispered again in obvious agitation, whereupon he laughed indulgently and patted her plucking hand with a paw as big and hairy as a bear's.

"Leave him to me, dear lady. Dinkydan's the name, wot?"

"Dinadan," the poet corrected mildly.

Now all eyes were turned upon Dinadan, who sat loosely and cup in hand, with his gaze among the bannered and cobwebby rafters. His friends regarded him expectantly, some of them even apprehensively, and the strangers curiously.

"Hah, just so!" exclaimed the large stranger. "You are Dinadan."

"Sir, to you," replied Dinadan softly, but loudly enough, at the same time shifting his position slightly and lowering his dreamy gaze from the rafters to the wine in his cup.

The other gaped in angry astonishment, and would have protested with oaths against this belittling of his ducal dignity (for a duke he was, though of a remote and savage duchy), had not their hostess plucked and whispered again. So he swallowed his monstrous oaths, but with difficulty and wry grimaces.

"Sing for the Duchess!" he cried instead, in a voice half choked with fury.

Dinadan smiled thinly into his cup and murmured as thinly: "The lady is quite capable of asking for herself."

"Please, Dinny," pleaded the dowager Duchess. "Duke Boreas intends no scathe. Please sing for us."

"Hah! Boreas!" Dinadan exclaimed, but considering, like one thinking aloud. "A wind from the north. Very appropriate."

Now he stood up and looked kindly at his hostess, yet far from happily, with a crooked smile and one eyebrow cocked and the lid of the other optic

slightly drooped, and so addressed her gently.

"Madam, I have sung at your bidding twenty times if one, and hope, with luck and God's mercy and your kindness, to do so as often again at least, and shall do so even now, but this time on a condition."

"A condition?" she wailed. "Oh, this is not like you!"

And all his friends present had the same thought, and they surmised that some shrewd play was afoot.

"You say sooth, lady," he sighed. "Erstwhiles I have ever sung for you from a full heart, no matter how sorely I railed at love and lovers, but tonight I have only a full stomach, and it somewhat queasy. However, I shall obey you to the extent of my ability and with my newest numbers—but only on condition that the vociferous person on your right first sings for his supper too."

"Person?" roared Duke Boreas. "Eh? D'ye mean me? D'ye call me a person?"

The hostess clapped her plump little hands to her ears. Some of Dinadan's friends chuckled, and others of them giggled. The six strangers, who had evidently come to the feast with Boreas, glared and scowled and plucked at their beards.

"I could think of other names for you," said Dinadan softly, "but would be sorry to offend the ears of the ladies."

DUKE BOREAS opened his mouth to roar again, but the fury of his indignation paralyzed his vocal cords and he only gaped.

"If you can't sing, how about a dance?" Dinadan went on smoothly and with a reasonable air. "What, you can't dance? That's too bad. And yet I have seen very good dancers of very much your shape and size, usually performing to the beating of a drum; but in my childhood I once saw an old bear who had learned to dance to any music. Can't my lord duke do anything to entertain the company and repay our fair hostess—in part, at least—for the trenchers you have cleared and the cups and cans you have drained?"

This was shrewder than his intimates even had expected, and they gasped apprehensively; and all the strangers from the northern wilds gnashed their carnivorous teeth; and Duke Boreas himself lurched and lunged to his feet, fumbling at his



"Me cap's off to you, sir! Never was so grand a song made before!"

side the while for the hilt of the sword, which fortunately had been left in the antechamber. But he found his voice, and so he straightway vented his wrath in a blood-curdling declamation of what he could and would do to Dinadan's liver and lights and other vital organs at the first opportunity. The hospitable Duchess popped up and slapped the visiting duke's whiskers with gem-encrusted hands.

"Gramercy," said Dinadan politely, but whether in thanks to his hostess for her gesture in his behalf or to Boreas for his bloody intentions, who knows? "But now is hardly the time for it, nor this the place," he continued. "But if my lord duke has come all the way from his mountainy fastnesses to play a part in King Arthur's great joustings and junketings at Michaelmas, at the Castle of Maidens, why not keep it till then, and so contribute to the success of the royal tournament instead of upsetting our gracious hostess' digestion here and now—not to mention my own?"

Boreas snarled: "So be it! Then I'll—I'll—" But he had already disposed horribly of every organ, limb and feature in the knight's possession, so he let it go at that.

"Agreed," said Dinadan pleasantly. "The time, the Feast of St. Michael; the place, the Castle of Maidens. With sharp points and edges, I pre-

sume? Quite. And as the appointment is for over two months from now, may I suggest that Your Grace make a note of it?"

"I'll remember," promised Boreas.

"Gramercy," said Dinadan; and he turned to the duchess with a curved instead of a crooked smile and a flutter of an eyelid.

"Madam, I apologize humbly. But now that your illustrious ducal guest has so politely excused himself from making the initial acknowledgement of your hospitality on the good and sufficient plea that he can neither sing nor dance—but I suspect that only his innate modesty deters his grace from excelling in both arts—I shall try to make amends by singing for both our suppers."

"You and your jibes an' jokes will be the death of me yet!" cried the Duchess, with tears of relief in eyes and voice; and his other friends present looked vastly relieved and surprised too, and Boreas and his six bewildered to the point of stupefaction.

"God defend you, madam, and from any worse death too!" replied Dinadan unctuously, and added matter-of-factly: "May I trouble you for the loan of a lute now?"

A page with a lute was at his elbow in a jiffy.

Now he twanged, now high, now low, and tauted one string and eased another. Now he strummed, and the

sound was as aimless and tuneless as the babble of a brook, and inquiring eyebrows were raised by a few who did not know him very well, and supercilious eyebrows by the seven who did not know him at all, and Boreas gurgled deep in his throat: "I could do as well meself!" And the brook babbled on, lisping and tinkling, till even the Duchess began to fear that the lutanist was dozing, overcome by his potations or the monotony of his strumming. But hark! The brook runs faster—faster and deeper and louder. Here's no lisping now, but sibilant complaining; no tinkling, but splashy clashing. Now the aimless brook runs full and strong between its banks and over its boulders. No babbling now, but a deep and increasing roar topped by splashy shouts: no brook now, but a mountain torrent in spate.

THE seven strangers stare, each to his front, and breathe thickly. They see the old gray Kelpie washed from his familiar pool and floundering furiously in the twisting, sloshing turmoil of waters black and green and brown, all sinewed and fanged with white. They see it as surely as they hear it. And now, of a sudden, Dinadan's fingers are still; and in the silence the bursting flood and quaking rocks are gone from before their entranced eyes, leaving only this scene of

candleshine agleam on cups and silver flagons and spilled wine, on bejeweled throats and breasts, on faces as fixed as masks and eyeballs like polished agates.

Boreas cried in a strange voice: "I heard the eagles screaming!"

"I took it for Old Kelpie," muttered another mountaineer.

"You were both right, I hope," said Dinadan. "Gramercy."

He was pleased with himself and them.

"And now something littler and lighter, and words to match," he said; and straightway he tinkled and sang a rustic sweet ditty to do with a shepherd and a dairymaid and kisses behind a haystack.

THE Duchess and other ladies laughed and clapped their hands, but none of the cavaliers, and Boreas and his fellows least of all, appeared much impressed.

"Wot d'ye know of dragons?" mumbled Duke Boreas. "Hah, a fight with a dragon! My sire fought a dragon—the biggest fire-spitter ever seen—single-handed, to the death. *There* be something to sing about!"

"Just so," murmured Dinadan consideringly. "I've never fought a dragon myself, nor seen one. Born too late. A fire-spitter, did you say?"

"Aye, with a belly hot as a forge, and fire from his nose like sparks from an anvil."

"Just so," agreed the poet, and fell to plucking at his lute, but only for a moment. "Nay, I need a harp for this!" he cried. "Madam, a harp, I pray you!"

And a harp was at his elbow in a count of seconds, for Sir Tristram, who was a skilled harper, was also a frequent guest at this table. It was a short harp, but strong and of nine strings; and after a few plunks and twangs, Dinadan had it humming like a swarm of bees and clanging like swords on helmets. And now the clangor outrang the humming, and the ladies held their ears.

"A dragon! A dragon!" shouted Dinadan, through and above the tumult of the brazen strings.

Thus and then "The Slaying of the Dragon" was made and uttered for the first time, for that hour and forever. By one old chronicler it is recorded as "Dragon-song of Dinadan," and by another as "Dragon-death," but by that name or this, fear-some fragments and wild vibrations of it have clanged down the centuries even to this day.

At last the dragon was slain and re-born to immortality; and Dinadan sat down, limp and spent. All eyes were upon him, some fearful, some fierce and some simply dazed. Duke Boreas' were fierce and dazed both, and at

once flaming and glazed; and in appearance as in behavior he was like one bedeviled to madness, grabbing at the air before and above him with strangling fingers, swelling and flexing the muscles of his heavy shoulders and thick neck and snorting like a bull; and all the other mountaineers were flexing their muscles too, and clawing the air and their whiskers and snorting. It was an awesome scene.

"That was horrid," wailed the Duchess. "Oh, my poor nerves!"

"I quite agree with you," sighed Dinadan; and he filled and drained a large cup and sighed again; whereupon the seven strangers filled and drained cups and cans, and heaved great sighs, in imitation; and the poet moaned on: "I got carried away. Couldn't feel tireder if I'd slain him with my own hands, the poor creature. And look at your harp!"

He set it on the table, so all could see that only five strings of the nine remained unbroken—only the strings of brass. Then he turned from the table and went hurriedly yet stumbly from the chamber and the house, and so home to his inn, and so to bed. And all night he dreamed, and always he was battling for his life with sword or axe or teeth or claws, for now he was a mountainy duke, and next he was himself, and now he was even the doomed and desperate dragon. But he was sleeping peacefully enough—the peace of exhaustion—when aroused by the good taverner with his good breakfast. He felt much better after the bacon and ale.

"But that performance was a mistake," he told himself. "Not only did I offend the Duchess and wreck her harp, and bedevil those wild mountaineers, but I wrecked and bedeviled my own dreams too. I'll stick to 'love' an' 'dove' hereafter—tongue in cheek for laughs and straight for tender tears—and not let the divine afflatus run away with me again."

IT was a fine morning, so he rode abroad on Garry. But before they had gone an easy mile, he heard shouts and the thumping of galloping big hoofs behind him. Turning his head, he beheld Duke Boreas and his six pelting after him on great horses as shaggy as themselves; and he would have ridden for dear life then, had not a second glance shown him that all were in silk and velvet like himself, and every head was uncovered, and every feathered cap held high in a big right hand. So he turned about and waited. When Boreas came nigh and drew rein, the six did the same; and when the Duke dismounted to stand, with cap in hand, all followed his example: so, in courtesy, Dinadan dismounted and uncovered too; whereupon Boreas advanced with open

arms and a countenance to suit, and clasped Dinadan to his breast.

"Well met!" he cried, and loosed his arms and clamped both hands on the knight's shoulders. "Me cap's off to you, sir!"

In truth, his fine headgear, with its feathers and great brooch studded with diamonds, lay unheeded in the dust.

"Gramercy, sir," murmured Dinadan, wondering what next. "And mine to you, Duke."

"Hah, but that was a song!" cried Boreas. "Never and nowhere was ever so grand a song as that made before, mauger me head! I've heard bards aplenty—the best in the North an' so the best in the whole world—but never a song to match your dragon-song. I fought that grumly monster the long night through, hacking an' hewing like a woodman, till the bed broke down with the violence of our struggle an' woke me up; but the reek of his breath blasting up from his burning vitals stuck in me nose till after breakfast. Sir, no warlock could conjure me up a nightmare to match your dragon!"

DINADAN was at once pleased and apprehensive.

"I am glad that you think well of the song, Sir Duke, and pray you to forgive me the nightmare—which, indeed, I had the honor of sharing with you," he said hopefully.

"Say ye so?" cried Boreas. "Sir, the honor is mine! And wot I think of the song is that if my lamented sire could hear it, he would burst forth from his tomb with pride an' heroic ardor. But come, Sir Dinadan, and honor me by breaking bread at my poor table."

So they all remounted and rode back to town at a soft pace, and to a castle which King Arthur had placed at the disposal of very important guests. And so they dined; and after hours of chomping and gulping, Duke Boreas dismissed his six gentlemen and told Dinadan a pitiful story and made a strange request.

He whispered it between gusty hiccups. He had a daughter. (At that Dinadan shivered, despite the buzzing and glow of usquebaugh in head and stomach.) She was his only child and the apple of his eye. (Again the knight shivered.) But she was frail of body and listless of spirit. (Dinadan felt better.) She moped and drooped all day long, and no doctor's physic nor charm nor cure of old wives and witches touched her. She continued to fade away before his eyes. So he had come to Camelot to take King Arthur's own physician back with him to save her dear life; but that learned man was sick abed himself and refused to budge. Then he

had all but given up hope of saving her, but upon hearing Dinadan the lutanist, and Dinadan the harper on top of that, hope had been rekindled in his breast. Now he gripped Dinadan's nigh shoulder and prayed him to come to that castle of gloom and sing his dragon-song to the poor child.

Replete with victuals and drink though Dinadan was, and moved with pity for daughter and father alike, he quaffed another cup and protested that such treatment would more likely kill than cure. The Duke, after due consideration and the filling and emptying of a cup himself, rejected the objection.

"Nay, not so, for all she needs is rousing, having been born melancholy of a melancholy mother, poor soul! For years now have I striven, to rouse her to take an interest in life by gentle means and not so gentle, and all to no avail. But that song of yours, Sir Poet—'The Slaying of the Dragon'—if that didn't bring her to life, she'd be happier dead."

Dinadan felt highly flattered but sorely confused too, and he protested again.

"But if it killed her? Even if she were happier so—which sounds unlikely to me—what of your feelings to find her so?"

"Me too. The castle is like a tomb from tower to keep. That's why I came away. But I have no fear. Nay, only the fear that we may be too late to save her."

They set out for the North at the first gleam of morning. Dinadan, on Garry, rode knee to knee with the mountain duke, and the six mountain barons came after in couples; and Dinadan's grooms on hackneys, a dozen mountain grooms on shaggy ponies, and wild footmen pulling and pushing on beasts of burden, came streaming after. It was an impressive cavalcade, for Boreas believed himself to be the greatest duke in the world, and paternal anxiety had not dulled his appetite for meat and drink. They traveled till noon, dined prodigiously and marched again till sunset. They supped deep and long and slept in a portable pavilion. They breakfasted right ducally at dawn, and rode again at sunrise; and the second day was like the first. But the third day differed slightly; and with every succeeding period of twenty-four hours the difference grew, the marches lengthening daily—in time even if not always in leagues—and recesses for eating and sleeping ever shortening proportionately. It was as if the Duke's anxiety for his daughter increased ever with the decreasing of the distance between them.

This change of tempo relieved Dinadan's mind of nagging though confused suspicions of Boreas' sincerity and his own acumen. This was surely proof that the Duke had not lured him into a wilderness on a wild-goose chase, or worse, with a cock-and-bull story.

"We'll be back in time for the tournament, I suppose," he said one morning, between a bite and a swig of a hasty breakfast before sunrise.

"Oh, that," grunted Boreas with his mouth full. "Why not?"

"I will be a queer thing then, for you and me to have ado with sharp spears," said Dinadan.

"With sharp spears?" the Duke spluttered. "Ho, d'ye still bear that madness in mind? Nay, never you an' me, Dinadan—with sharp spears nor blunt neither!"

"Gramercy! But should my dragon-song fail to rouse the poor damosel—or maybe rouse her to her mortal undoing—what then?"

"Then will I found a great monastery an' meself turn monk; and you, me friend, will fare home unscathed to the joys an' junketings of Camelot."

"Not so!" cried Dinadan, moved to the very roots of his generous and impulsive being. "Nay, dear Boreas, I'll turn monk too!"

At that, the Duke sprang to his feet and pulled the knight upright and embraced him.

"Fie upon such dismal talk!" he cried. "You and me with tonsured heads? Nay, we'll dance at her wedding. To horse! To horse!"

Daily the way grew rougher and the wilderness more rugged. They toiled up and down hills, and in the gloom of hanging black woods, and so into the ultimate mountains by steep glens and crooked gorges, climbing to the croak of ravens and scream of eagles, and so came at last to the Castle of Winds.

The young Damosel Wanda was still alive, but in bed and deeper sunk than ever before in that curse of melancholia inherited from her mother, who had died of it. Her tresses were gold, but paler than daffodils; her face was small, and as pale and still as a mask of alabaster; the color of her eyes Dinadan could not tell when he was first brought to her, for they were closed; and the narrow hands crossed on her breast were as still and white as if she were the marble effigy of a lady on a tomb.

"Daughter, the valorous knight Sir Dinadan—the greatest poet of this age—has come all the way from Camelot to sing to you," said Boreas.

The pale lips stirred with a murmured "Gramercy" too faint to hear, but the eyelids stirred not at all.

The ancient nurse whispered to the Duke: "The poor lamb's past heeding any earthly music. Nought but the Trump o' Doom can rouse her now, I'm feared."

But Boreas placed a chair for Dinadan and put the harp of the knight's own selection into his hands. Dinadan fingered the strings reluctantly, fearful of breaking that tenuous thread of life with a shrewd or discordant sound.

"Fear not," Boreas assured him. "Play now."

So his fingers ceased their fumbling, and the harp breathed a melody as of bees and hummingbird moths in blooming lilacs.

"Louder," urged the Duke.

So the melody swelled and lifted and quickened, though still of gauzy wings and honeyed blossoms.

"The dragon now!" urged Boreas in a desperate voice.

Dinadan looked up then from his flying fingers to the heedless blind mask as pale as alabaster on the pillow as white as marble; and he thought "She is past hearing or caring, so 'twill harm her no more than if she were carved of stone on her own tomb, poor heart." And he looked down again at his fingers and shifted them to the strings of brass and copper; and the air was rent by a brazen clang, then filled and shaken with awful clangor. He stood up then and gave tongue, outshouting the wild tumult of the harp with wilder words; and so he fought and slew that dragon again, but this time with his eyes fixed upon the savage plucking and tearing of his





"Why didn't the young jack-anapes rouse her from her trance long ago?" cried the Duke Boreas.

fingers among the maddened harp-strings.

Then silence, save for the Duke's gusty gasps and snorts. Dinadan glanced aside fearfully and saw the old nurse crouched on the floor with both hands to her ears. Then, and yet more apprehensively, he looked at the bed. He uttered an inarticulate cry, brief but charged with more emotions than relief only, and staggered backward a pace and sat down hard. *For the damosel's eyes were wide open and regarding him—and they were as green as emeralds.* And he maintained and returned her look as fixedly, but as a doomed bird the paralyzing stare of a snake.

"God save me!" he thought—if it could be called thinking. "Green. The greenest I ever saw—God help me!"

And he tried to blink, but could not so much as twitch a lid. He tried to glance aside, but his eyeballs stuck like frostbound pebbles. Then Boreas grasped both his shoulders with mighty paws, raised him and turned him about and embraced him.

"It roused her!" cried the Duke. "Like I knew it would. You've saved her, dear lad! But enough for now. Come away now, for I can see it was a sore strain on your vitality as well as on your fingers an' larynx."

For the moment at least, the spell was broken; and Dinadan departed from that chamber right willingly, though with shaking knees and his host's support and guidance. Together they descended to the buttery, where more than butter was dispensed, and there each of them disposed of two long horns of the very best. Now the four household bards appeared, each with his harp, and louted low to their lord and just as low to Dinadan.

"Did you hear it?" asked Boreas.

"Aye, in the antechamber, according to orders," replied the leader of the four, who had a wreath of wilted foliage on his bald pate and a beard of such length and profusion that he wore it tucked into his girdle. "It nigh brasted me heart an' ears alike," he added.

"A great song," said the Duke, with a challenging note in his voice.

"Aye, Lord, a masterpiece."

"Repeat it then, Bard Gomery."

"Nay, Lord, I'm an old man. If I were able, the effort would prove me undoing; and unable, I'd be the ruination of the most terrible grand song ever heard even in these mountains."

"Fair enough," said Boreas.

He glanced inquiringly at the other harpers, but each shook his head. So he signaled to the cellarer, who straightway brought two long horns of Mountain Dew and two great jacks of ale to the bards, knowing their individual tastes in such matters; and he signaled again within the minute, and for refills for Dinadan and himself too. After a short silence disturbed only by gulps and heavy breaths, the youngest of the household bards—but even he was middle-aged and more than fully grown—drew a hairy wrist across his mouth and spoke.

"Lord, I'll essay it."

At that, Boreas cried: "Right manfully said, good Jard ap Rhys! But first another sip to limber larynx an' fingers. Ho, Master Cellarer, more sips all round!"

Horns and jacks were filled again. After another liquid silence, Jard ap Rhys wiped his mouth again, then set his jack on the floor and applied both hands to his harp. Well, he had powerful hands, God wot! The clangor was terrific.

"Hold! You went wrong there!" cried Dinadan, grabbing the nearest instrument and clawing like mad. "This is how it goes!"

So Jard clawed like mad in imitation, and so the volume of clanging clamor was doubled. Old Gomery quivered and reared like an old war-horse to the braying of trumpets, "I'll take it now, young feller me lad!" and pushed himself in, harp and all, between Jard and Sir Dinadan, facing the knight. But Jard refused to give over, and so now there were three harps in uproar together. The air shook; the motes in the sunray from the little window danced; and the curtained cobwebs among the rafters stirred and shook down dust and the bright shells of sucked-dry wasps and bluebottle flies.

"The words now!" bellowed Boreas, waving his right arm, horn and all, and spattering the company with Mountain Dew.

"The dragon!" shouted Dinadan; and Gomery and Jard ap Rhys shouted it like a close echo.

Now Dinadan sang, and the mountain bards bawled and chanted word for word with him and no more than a breath behind him. It was tremendous, devastating, exhausting.

"Never again!" gasped the poet, dropping the borrowed harp and flopping across the butterfly hatch.

HE rested for an hour in a little garden of roses. After dinner, he and Boreas rode softly in a crooked valley for a few hours. Then he idled in the garden till supper; and after supper he retired early to bed and slept fitfully, dragon-ridden. He breakfasted in bed. Refreshed and elegantly dressed, he accompanied Boreas to Wanda's chamber. They found the damosel sitting high against the pillows, with wide-open eyes and slightly parted lips; and now her lips were like the petals of a wild rose, and there was even a faint suggestion of pink in her thin cheeks.

"My darling, this is Sir Dinadan, in case you don't remember him from yesterday," said the fond father.

"I remember him," she murmured, smiling faintly.

Dinadan bowed low.

"He saved your life, darling," the Duke told her.

"Gramercy," she murmured. "It was wonderful."

"She took her broth like a good girl this morning, an' a duck egg too," said the old nurse.



The Duke exclaimed, "God be praised—an' this knight too—for the miracle of the age!" And he asked softly: "D'ye crave more music now, me darling? Maybe something soft an' low this time, or merry an' jinking like young lovers dancing? If so, just ask Sir Dinadan prettily, and you'll get it."

THE damosel did not look at her father, but continued to gaze greenly at Dinadan; and Dinadan continued to gaze back eye to eye, for he could not help himself, and maintained a polite and serene countenance despite internal tremors of foreboding.

"Please," she sighed.

Now Boreas set a chair close beside the bed and prayed his guest to sit: so the bodeful poet sat. Now Boreas produced a lute and presented it.

"Soft and low now, dear friend," he whispered.

So, with a shrewd effort, Dinadan lowered his gaze from the green eyes to the lute on his knee and played soft and low. He played a weeping willow tree and a little weeping wind to sob in it. Now the Duke drew up another chair and seated himself; and the willow wept and the little wind sobbed, on and on and on. Soon the old nurse came to Dinadan's shoulder and whispered: "Ye've played 'em both to sleep, sir."

Dinadan ventured to lift his gaze from the lute-strings to the face on the pillow. Sure enough, her eyes were shut. But even while he toyed with the thought of slipping out and away to the refuge of the garden, they opened wide, and full upon him.

"Nay, I am not asleep, though dreaming a magic dream," she murmured. "And I tried to put words to the dream bred of your magic music," she murmured on. "But I am not a



*"It roused her!" cried the Duke.
"You've saved her, dear lad."*

a foul one. But I'll amend it—with God's help—or I'm no poet nor a merciful man even! Hark now to the truth about love."

He strummed again, but with soft fingers now. He sang again, but now voice and words alike were as sweet and smooth as honey and dew. And so he made one of the most memorable love songs ever, and one of the longest, though he felt nothing of the grand sentiment for this particular damosel, but only pity and anxiety for her, and the tender memories of lost love over all. Oh, he was a poet all right. And as he saw the green eyes brighten again, and the pale lips and cheeks bloom once more, relief, and pride in his song, carried him high and far beyond that chamber and above the world, where he soared like an eagle and looked down at forest and mountain, castle and croft and people, like a god surveying and approving his own creations: and feeling godlike, he sang like a god; and such was the potency of his performance that he himself soon succumbed to it, and slumped motionless and silent in a trance of enchantment and of sheer exhaustion.

DINADAN was roused from that trance by heavy paws on his shoulders and a gusty whispering in his face. It was Duke Boreas.

"Look ye! Another miracle!"

Dinadan looked at the bed, and sat straight and gaped at what he saw there. The damosel's eyes were closed, but lids and lashes lay as lightly as a moth's wings. Her lips were smiling sweetly and as bright as rose petals dew-washed. Her cheeks were pink too, and childily round now instead of thin; and now there was a rosy glow on the alabaster brow as if a fairy lamp burned behind it.

"She's beautiful!" he gasped, astonished.

"So she is! And I'm as surprised as you! She wasn't ever before, save to meself and her poor mother an' Nurse Bolster maybe, but now she's a spanking beauty—or ye've bedeviled me eyesight."

"Nay, nothing like that, Duke. I'm no warlock nor enchanter. She's a beauty, all right! I have seen only one more beautiful—but she was false as fair, ah me!—or two, if I count Queen Isoud of Cornwall."

"Another miracle then, like I said before. First, you rouse her to life with the fierce Dragon Song; an' that was only yesterday. An' now you turn her into a ravishing beauty—me poor little sick melancholy lamb—with a

poet, and am in no wise magical, but you are the greatest poet in Christendom. So I pray you, of your gentleness, to double the magic with your voice."

She smiled. And he essayed a smile in return, but achieved only a desperate grimace.

"At your service," he mumbled, for lack of an honest excuse; for how could he, who had come here for the sole purpose, and of his own free will, to minister to this damosel with song, now refuse her request for more? "What will you?"

"A song of love," she sighed.

Now God defend me! he thought wildly; and again he tried to detach his gaze from hers, but again in vain. Keep your head now, and sing her the bitter truth of it, he told himself. Cure her of that folly. Kill it now while still blind and feeble and harmless in her ignorant heart. Crush it

like the viper it is—the very serpent of the Fool's Paradise!

"So be it," he muttered. "A song of love. A song of lies."

And he strummed a string, and straightway began to sing a song so harsh and bitter that experienced gallant dames, including broadminded queens and tough old duchesses even, had blanched at it and stopped their ears against it before now. But when he saw the light fade in her green eyes, the red fade in her lips and the dawn-pink of eglantine flee her thin cheeks, pity filled and melted him, and resolution and voice failed him. Remorse smote him, and panic lest he had roused her to life yesterday with the fiercest song he had ever made, only to break her innocent heart now with the deadliest song any man had ever made.

"God forgive me!" he muttered. "My mistake. Forget it. A joke—an'



"Nay, I'm an old man. I'd be the ruination of the most terrible grand song ever heard even in these mountains."

song of love. Hah, love! Come to me arms, me dear lad!"

And he pulled the knight upright from the chair and hugged him hard, exclaiming "Gramercy, gramercy!" the while, over and over.

Dinadan disengaged himself as gently as possible and said: "Glad to have been of service. Think nothing of it."

"Think nothing of it, d'ye say? Ho-ho! One of my mountains is yours already, and a high castle to match it—I'll make a record of it this

very day; an' I wouldn't wonder if all my mountains an' castles will be yours when I am done with them, by the look of things. Ha-ha!"

And he slid an arch glance from Dinadan to the sleeping beauty and back again. The knight, still staggering from the embrace and dismayed at the prospect, gasped and stammered.

"Nay, nay, God forbid! That's to say—gramercy, gramercy—but may you live a hundred years! I—ah!—pray you to excuse me now. Utterly ex-

hausted! Worse than slaying the dragon."

"Just so, dear lad. You an' me for the buttery now—I be all atremble meself—an' leave our beauty to her beautiful dreaming."

So they departed Wanda's bedchamber together and descended to the buttery: and there, after draining one horn himself while Boreas drained three, Dinadan stole away to the little garden, leaving the Duke spellbinding head butler and master-cellarer with a fuddled account of the second miracle, and the sudden ravishing beauty of the Damosel Wanda. And there he sat down in the shade of a little tree full of pink bloom and golden bees and clasped his head with both hands. And so he sat and thought desperately, but to no purpose, of the coil into which he had sung himself. But not for long.

"**N**OBLE Sir Dinadan, pray forgive this intrusion," said an anxious voice.

At that, he looked up and saw a tall youth standing before him, and smiling down at him, but with a troubled countenance.

He sighed: "Don't mention it. What would you, young sir?"

"I heard the miracle song—but it wrought no miracle to me, sir, for my eyes have seen her beauty ever," replied the youth, speaking so hurriedly that he all but gabbled. "I was behind the arras when you sang it, and when you were gone, I went to the bedside and looked at her. Aye, she's beautiful! But to me she was always so, though never so rosy as now since she sickened four dreary years ago."

"D'ye say so?" cried Dinadan eagerly; and he got to his feet as eagerly. "D'ye say she was always beautiful to you—this Damosel Wanda—as beautiful before my song as after?"

"Aye, sir, by my halidom! White or red, thin or round, she is beautiful to me."

"Hah! A real lover then, true and constant an' blind! And quite mad, God help you! Who are you, young sir? And what would you of me?"

"Sir, I am Lyon ap Denys, bred from little boyhood as a page in this great house and kindly nourished, and now I am captain of the castle guard. And Wanda and I were playmates daily, and she loved me even as I love her, until that melancholy sickness from which you roused her befell her. And of you, noble an' generous Sir Dinadan, I ask only that you return to Camelot and your amorous queens an' merry dames an' leave my dear love to me."

"I would leave her to you blithely, my friend—but what if she sank again into that melancholy trance?"

"Nay, sir, then would I rouse her out of it even as you did, for I have

your wonderful dragon-song in my ears an' fingers to the last immortal word an' clang."

"Hah! So you are a skilled harper then?"

"Aye, sir, as any in these mountains."

"Good! But what if her sudden beauty should pass as suddenly as my song of love brought it into being?"

"Why, sir, she would still be beautiful to me."

"Just so—and still loved by the Duke, but not still beautiful to his proud eyes. Then her father would come seeking me; and not only for her beauty's sake but for her health's sake too."

Lyon admitted this ruefully.

"Now harky to me," said Dinadan. "I am as eager to be gone as you are to have me go; and when you show me your ability to keep the zest for life afire in your damosel's heart an' veins an' pretty lips, then I'll be off, and with an easy conscience."

"But I am a fumbler at the lute," sighed Lyon. "We are all harpers an' bawlers in these mountains, God help me!"

"God help you indeed! But you have a voice and ears and fingers; and you're a lover; so I'll essay to amend your incapacity." And stepping closer, Dinadan spoke on for a full minute in an earnest whisper.

AFTER the midday feast, Dinadan excused himself from cup and horn on the plea of an aching head, but instead of retiring to his couch he went secretly from the castle and its purlieus and into a high glen, taking the borrowed lute with him; and there he was soon joined by Lyon ap Denys. There the two remained till the westing sun was wheeling on the mountain-top, passing the lute back and forth between them, and fingering the strings turn and turn about, and singing soft and low in turn and sometimes together.

Soon after sunrise next day, Duke Boreas roused his guest to accompany him to Wanda's bedside.

"But mayhap she still sleeps," protested Dinadan.

"An' wot if she does?" chuckled the Duke. "Thanks to you, me darling chick is now as easy to look at asleep as awake."

So the knight dressed hastily and went reluctantly. They were halted in the antechamber by unexpected sounds from within.

"Wot goes on?" gasped Boreas.

Dinadan shushed him and whispered: "Quiet now! 'Tis music—save the mark!—of lute an' voice. Now what the devil?"

"Music?" snarled the Duke, but into his beard. "I never before heard such villainous discordant twiddlin' an'

caterwaulin'! Enough to undo all your miracle-making!" And he would have charged across the antechamber and into the bedroom beyond but for Dinadan's restraining hand and voice.

"Easy does it now," the knight cautioned. "We'll take a look first." And his grip on the Duke's arm was like iron.

So they went softly to the curtains which hung across the doorway and parted them a finger's breadth and peeked within: and what they saw there dumfounded them both.

The damosel sat high and leaned forward and sidewise, with wide eyes green and bright as emeralds yet mistily soft, and lips and cheeks and brow all roses and roseate snow; and a youth knelt on both knees beside the bed, fumbling unhandily at complaining lute-strings and croaking like a raven; and a little way off, the old nurse dozed in her chair.

Dinadan loosed the curtains from his left hand but tightened the grip of his right on the Duke's arm. And he moved backward and turned around, removing and turning the stupefied Duke with him. And so they withdrew from the antechamber; and it was not till they were in the hall below that either spoke.

"I heard the miracle song—but it wrought no miracle to me, sir."

"It was that springal Lyon ap Denys!" gasped Boreas.

"Aye, and making a travesty of the song I taught him yesterday, bedeviling words an' music both!" exclaimed Dinadan. "And I warned him he hadn't mastered it yet. But he thought differently, it seems. Aye, and he was right! You saw her—eyes an' lips an' all!—twice as beautiful as I made her yesterday with the sweetest love song in the world rendered as only I am capable of? And the way she bent toward him? Hah, there's a lesson for me! A lover is a greater miracle man than a poet!"

"Then why the devil didn't the young jackanapes rouse her from her trance long ago?" cried the Duke.

"He didn't know his power," said Dinadan thoughtfully. "Aye, that's the answer: it took a loveless poet to teach a lover the power of love. Hah, that's a thought! And now, dear Boreas, since you have no further need of me here, I'll be getting along home."

The Duke sighed and scratched a hairy cheek. Then he brightened suddenly and clapped a paw on the knight's shoulder.

"Fair enough, dear Dinadan! Nor much further need of me here neither. So if you'll just stop for the wedding, I'll go along back to Camelot with you."

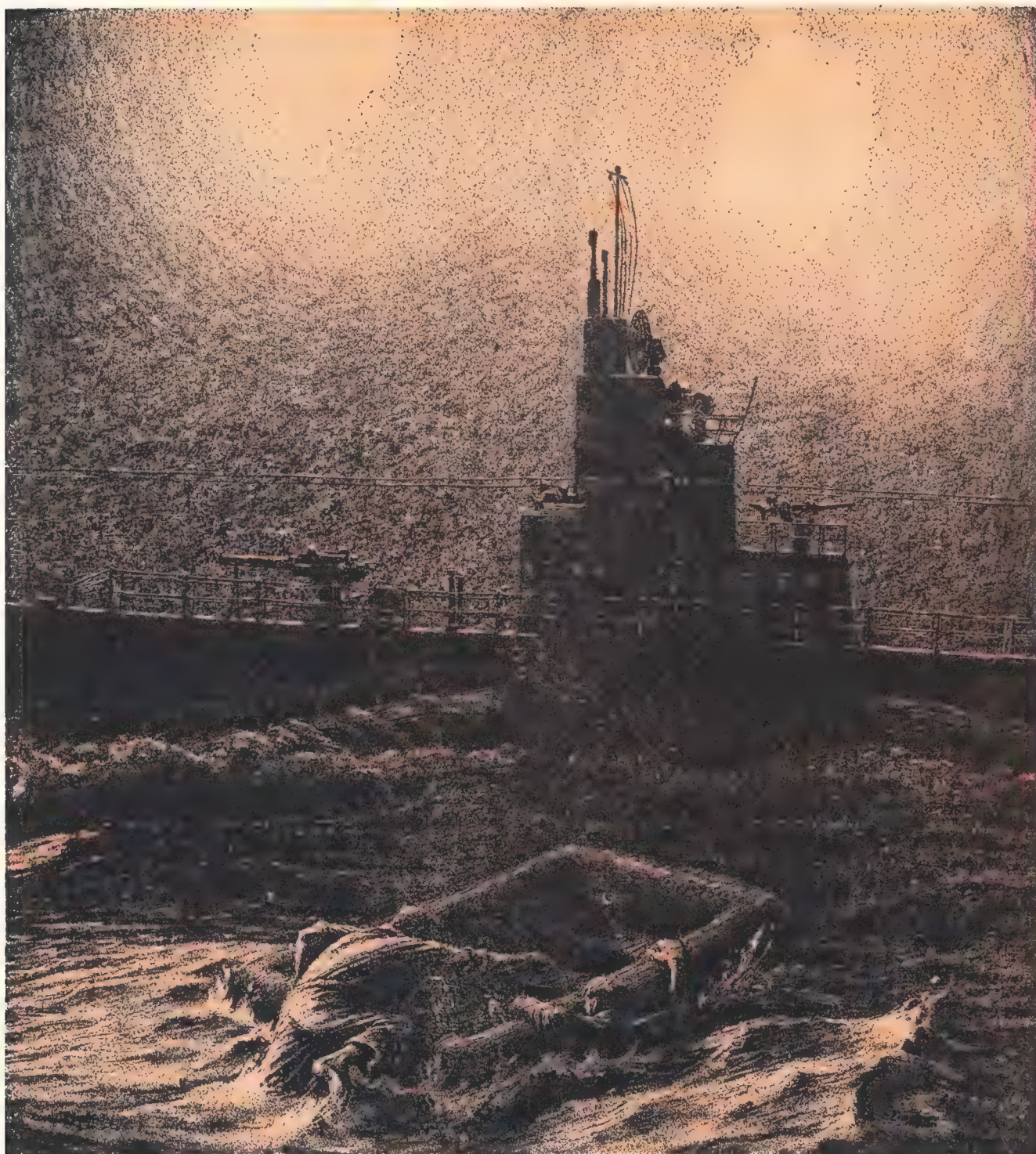




Surface Attack

In most of the submarine warfare chronicles we have printed, our subs attacked submerged. The *Parche* took advantage of darkness to gain speed and maneuverability on the surface, and wrought havoc in an enemy convoy.

by REAR ADMIRAL HARLEY COPE, U.S.N., Ret.



Illustrated by BRENDAN LYNCH

THE *Parche*, commanded by Commander Lawson P. (Red) Ramage, during her Second War Patrol, taught the Japs a lesson that cost them the better part of a convoy.

With the *Steelhead* and *Hammerhead* as the other members of Lew Parks Wolf Pack, the *Parche* ranged up and down the area south of Formosa looking for something worthwhile on which to expend the torpedoes restlessly lying in her tubes. She had sunk three large freighters and a transport on her previous pa-

trol. This time she wanted to increase her bag of trophies. Two different prizes had been dangled tantalizingly in front of her—a fast unescorted aircraft carrier and a cruiser-destroyer group; but constant harassing air- and long-range radar-controlled gun attacks had kept the submarine from getting into torpedo range, and had left her seething with frustration!

During the darkest hours preceding dawn on 31 July, 1944, the *Parche* quivered with excitement and prepared to cast aside the bonds of frustration that had beset her when the

radar operator reported that pips were splattering all over the screen. Plenty of ships!

This was just what the flaming-haired skipper had been praying for. Time was running out, though. He would have to work fast if he wanted to get in an attack before the curtain of night was rolled up.

With improved radar aboard, a skipper always made night attacks on the surface if at all possible. The four engines gave him a good speed advantage over the enemy and permitted him to circle his slower-moving opponent

like a skillful boxer, then at a propitious moment to lash out, rapier-like—and step back out of danger in time. When he submerges, the engines cannot be used, and he is forced to sacrifice this maneuverability and speed for the advantage of invisibility, which is great in daylight but unnecessary at night because the darkness covers them anyway. On the other hand, submerged, the darkness is a disadvantage because it makes an accurate periscope sight almost impossible. While radar turns darkness into daylight when on the surface, the inability to use radar submerged would leave them lunging around in the darkness blindly. So, as long as our radar was superior to the Japs', the night surface attacks offered the best chance of success.

While reporting the contact to the Pack Commander aboard the *Parche*, Red Ramage called for flank speed on four engines and steered straight for the enemy formation. There was no time to play around for position. It had to be now!

BUT the enemy was alert too, and quickly picked up the submarine on his radar. However, before the escorting destroyers could maneuver for positions to deliver effective counterattacks, Red Ramage was in their midst, selecting his first targets and dealing out Sunday punches.

A torpedo from the stern tubes severely damaged a freighter. Then in quick succession torpedoes were lunging from bow and stern tubes. The leading tanker sank; a second one showed a gaping hole in her side, throwing the whole convoy into a state of pandemonium. No one knew which way to turn to avoid the killer in their midst.

And the *Parche* stayed there even though by this time too the escorts were close aboard, some within two hundred yards, and the submarine was being spattered by bullets of all sizes.

While counting the seconds until his torpedo tubes were reloaded, Red Ramage cleared the topside of all personnel. That is, of all except himself and a quartermaster who volunteered to remain on the T.B.T.—for torpedo firing control.

The last man had just scampered down the bridge hatch when the forward torpedo room reported that two of their tubes had been reloaded—and a split second later their torpedoes lashed out at a transport which disintegrated under the terrific impact.

The Skipper picks up the narrative of this wild melee when the remainder of the forward reload was fired at a tanker. . . . "First torpedo disintegrated bow while the other three piled into his bridge, quarter and stern respectively. Tanker sank almost immediately, leaving only small oil fire

on surface. . . . The escorts now started to become a problem with their indiscriminate machine-gun fire and flares.

However, there came along another target, a medium AK or AP (cargo ship or transport) with a sizable superstructure just asking for trouble. . . . At eight hundred yards range fired three stern tubes at this menace (referring to a tanker that was spraying the *Parche* very generously with 20-mm. and 40-mm. stuff). All hit—the gunfire from that quarter was effectively silenced and with five torpedoes in her the big tanker gave up and went down, leaving only a small oil fire as did the first one. . . .

Two escorts on the port quarter were now concentrating their machine-gun fire on us and we were about to come right to put them astern and head for the prize of the evening, a huge AP, when we spotted a small fast job similar to the *Kaiho Maru* coming up sharp on the starboard bow, intent on ramming us. Called the engine house to pour in all the oil they had—the other fellow had the right of way but we were in a hurry. When halfway across his bow, put rudder full right, swinging our stern clear. The Japs were screaming like a bunch of wild pigs as we cleared all around by less than 50 feet. Mutual cheers and jeers were exchanged by all hands. . . ."

THIS now left the submarine surrounded by smoking ships and destroyers spouting bullets from all guns at anything resembling the deadly steel stiletto in their midst.

"We found ourselves boxed in on both sides," continued Red Ramage, "and the big transport ahead with a zero angle (headed directly for them). This left no alternative but to fire down his throat. . . . It was a bull's-eye. . . . The big AP was stopped and down by the bow but showed no further signs of going down, so we decided (the Skippers always used *we* instead of *I*) to go back and deliver the *coup de grâce*. . . . The big AP suddenly disappeared from sight and radar in one big blub as the stern came up, and it went straight down, head first. Set course 330 to put a little distance between us and this hornets' nest as dawn was beginning to break. . . . One of the escorts challenged us with AA by searchlight; this appeared to be rather unusual until one of the quartermasters explained, 'These Japs probably have a lot of forms to fill out too.'"

In this forty-six-minute thrill-packed action "that was eminently outstanding in the annals of submarine warfare," to quote the Board of Awards, the *Parche* fired nineteen torpedoes, obtaining fifteen hits, sinking four ships, severely damaging another.

As the *Parche* raced for the safety of the horizon a patrol vessel offered to contest her way and was quickly sunk by the accurate fire of the submarine's deck gun.

But the pinkish gun flashes were sighted in the murky dawn by an enemy cruiser-destroyer task force coming up belatedly to aid the convoy, and their accurate gunfire forced the submarine to submerge to avoid destruction.

In recommending the Skipper for the highest of all awards, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Board said:

"The counterattacks of the enemy against *Parche* during her series of aggressive surface-torpedo attacks upon the convoy on 31 July, 1944, were probably the most intensive and thorough counterattacks ever encountered by a submarine engaged in surface approaches and attacks against the enemy. Only exceptional seamanship, outstanding personal heroism and extreme bravery of *Parche's* Commanding Officer saved this submarine from serious damage, if not total destruction by enemy gunfire and ramming.

"The Commanding Officer's courageous and fearless actions in remaining on the bridge of his submarine during intense and accurate enemy gunfire in order to maintain the offensive at all times, enabled him to control his ship skillfully and efficiently, launch his torpedoes effectively and evade the enemy's vigorous efforts to destroy *Parche* . . ."

FLAK

BRAZIL was the first Latin American country to declare war on Germany in 1917 and the only Latin-American nation to send troops to Europe in World War II.

Lawrence Washington, brother of George Washington, was a Marine officer in one of the three Marine regiments recruited in 1740 by the British in the colonies.

The first West Point graduate to die in battle was Ensign George Roman, Class of 1811, of the First Infantry—he was killed in a battle with Indians and British while on a march from Fort Dearborn to Detroit in 1812.

Nathaniel Greene became a brigadier general in the Continental Army on June 22, 1775—five months after he enlisted as a private.

—by Harold Helfer

A MOVING HUMAN DRAMA COMES TO ITS DRAMATIC CLIMAX AT THIS ALPINE SKI RESORT.

by D. K. FINDLAY



Ticket to Kitzbühel

HE saw her first in the square at night, the snow falling gently about her. She wore a white coat over her ski clothes; she was looking in the shop windows, and she seemed to be waiting for someone.

For each of us there is a place with a special atmosphere; and this Tyrolean village in the Dolomites was his. He had come there once after the war, drawn by some chance talk of the skiing there, and he had had the best holiday of his life. He had decided that he would never return to it.

He wanted to remember it as it was the first time. Another visit might prove it to be just another Austrian ski resort, crowded with all

nationalities. Then unexpectedly his office moved him to London—he was a news correspondent for the Canadian press; he had two weeks' leave, and airplanes were flying to Zurich.

He took the Arlesberg Express, crossed the Swiss border at Buchs, ran through the avalanche country where the roads were thin corridors in the snow; down into the Valley of the Inn and Innsbruck. At midnight the train made a big loop, and came out on a valley floor; and there was Kitzbühel under its snowy peaks. Nothing had changed. The church towers stood like beacons of moonlight; the village still seemed to be climbing the hill; and clusters of lights crowned the farther heights. That night he

slept in a Tyrol inn, with balconies and dark old beams, slept with his feet sticking out from under the feather mattress. . . .

In spite of his feeling that it was unwise to come back, his holiday began well. At the Ski Schule he ran into Toni, a lean, likable instructor whom he had known before.

"It iss goot you come back. Rudi and Wanda, who skied with us before, are also back."

"Good. How is the snow on the Hahnenkamm?"

"Iss very goot."

He got a big welcome from old friends. "Mackenzie, I am delighted to see you!" cried Wanda. She was a Swiss girl who spoke five languages



Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

and was as strong as a horse. "And see! Here is Rudi!"

Rudi shook hands. He was a round, fat Austrian who always wrapped himself so carefully that only his glasses and the tip of his nose could be seen under his parka hood. "Now the trouble iss beginning. When Mackenzie comes, he will neffer stop—no rest, no sittings down—always 'Let's go!' Always shooting like a cannon-ball."

It was fine to be back.

He liked to take a turn about the square around nine o'clock. He liked to see a barred window in a stone tower; he admired the shape of the four-hundred-year-old houses. He looked in all the shop windows at the Tyrolean costumes and sports wear; he read all the notices posted on the wall of the *Postamt*. There was an old arch in a terra-cotta wall; and it was there he saw her first, this girl who came every night to the square. She was dark; she had a face made memorable by some sweetness in the curve of her cheek.

He thought about her in the morning while he shaved. He speculated about her at dinner. Why did she come every night to the square and then disappear—he had not seen her in any of the dance places. He went to the square every evening as if he had an appointment. He did not specially want to speak to her, but he wanted her to be there, lovely, and part of a mystery. Then one night she did not come. He prowled the village from one end to the other and did not find her.

WHEN he arrived the next night, she was there, standing by a window near the terra-cotta wall. He went straight to her.

"Last night you did not come. I was worried."

She turned to look at him. She had a clear dark-eyed face, with one eyebrow rising.

"It was very upsetting. But now you have returned, let us do the windows together. There is a new cape in the window of Herr Tagwerker,

seventy-three schillings, very good value."

"You are an American?"

"Canadian. My name is Mackenzie."

"What place in Canada do you come from?"

"Ottawa."

"It is very cold in Canada?"

"There is a square in Ottawa so cold you need a blood transfusion to cross it. And there is a square in Kitzbühel where a lovely *Fräulein* walks around, looking as if she were waiting for someone. Let us go and have some wine, and you will tell me about her."

"Thank you, no. Good night."

"Very well. We will go round and round until I fall exhausted."

They went from window to window looking at the displays.

"You are happy to be here?" she asked when he was silent.

"I am very happy to be here. I came here once before just after the war. Someone said: 'If you ski, you should go to Kitzbühel.' So I came. The moment I saw it, I knew it was the right sort of place for me. It was full of the right sort of magic. So then I went away, and I was afraid to come back for fear it would be different."

"But you did come back. And then what has happened?"

"At first, everything is wonderful. Including the pretty *Fräulein* in the square. I ask her to come and have a drink, *natürlich*. But she says no, good night—and everything is finished. My holiday is in ruins."

She laughed. "In that case—"

"You see, everything happens for the best in Kitzbühel."

Over the wine, he found out a number of things: that she was a Viennese, that she would be lovely in any town in the world, that she was naturally gay in spite of the trouble in her eyes. Her name was Lili.

NEXT night they walked all about the village. In the soft moonlight, the shadowy doorways were works of art. She knew the history of many of the houses; she had been coming here since she was a child.

"Why do you come every night to the square?"

"Habit, perhaps. I used to think someone would come."

"Who?"

"Oh, they say in America, everyone has a hope, a dream. Here everyone has a story, usually sad. We do not speak of it."

"You are beautiful, you know. You are making a hole in my heart."

"One should not have a hole in one's heart on a holiday."

"And what a holiday! The skiing, it is *wunderbar*; the town is *wunder-*

bar; and you are *wunderbar*. If you do not think I am falling in love with you, you are not Viennese, you are a sausage."

"Holiday love—as if I were one of these old houses you like so much. But that is all right—fall in love—till the end of your holiday, and then go away. I too am going away. It is the end of something—and the beginning of something for me."

"*Bitte, Fräulein*, you will in love with me a little be?"

She opened her eyes at him, mockingly. "*Natürlich! Der Canadian Herr*, he is rich, he is handsome!"

THERE followed days to remember for old age. Every day they skied with Toni and Wanda and Rudi on the Hahnenkamm, sat in the sun at the little inns, and came home in long whistling runs over the pink snows. At night, they danced and listened to the violins.

One night he learned something about Lili from Wanda and Rudi.

"You haf a vord for her in English," said Rudi. "It means whateffer she does, it ends up bad for her."

"She seems as if she were waiting for someone."

"For Paul," said Wanda. "It was one of those bad things which happened in Vienna, not long ago. There was a black market in medicines, but they were not good medicines, and there were many deaths. Paul was a doctor in one of the hospitals, and the military police used him to set a trap. They caught a Russian. *Nicht gut!* One night Paul was called by the Russian police to attend an accident, and he never returned."

"Could nothing be done?"

"Lili tried everything. She went from office to office. No one knew anything: Then they got a message: Paul had been seen on a train going to one of their prison camps. They sent money, papers. Nothing was ever heard."

"He iss dead," said Rudi. "No one escapes from those camps."

At the end of the week, the Ski Schule gave a ball and that night it seemed that no one wished to go to bed. They saw the sun rise from the balcony of Lili's inn. Her dark hair was tumbled; the sadness was back in her face.

"Wanda and Rudi told me about Paul. I am sorry."

"I am glad that they told you. Our best times were here. In Vienna he might not have found me, but he would come here. I used to think that as long as I did not give up hope, as long as I waited, then he must be alive. . . . But now the waiting is over. Good-by, my little Mackenzie who calls me a sausage."

"What are you talking about?"



"It is not funny, my friend. I will race you down."

Rudi and Wanda and he were loafing in the sun when a sports car, a Lancia, went through the square much too quickly.

"It is Conrad!" cried Wanda.

"Tonight you will walk around the square alone," said Rudi.

"Lili has told you about Conrad?" asked Wanda.

"No. What about him?"

"Well—" Wanda was discreet. "She is very fond of him. When Paul disappeared, she had no one to turn to but Conrad—he is attached to the

Austrian Commission. He has great influence; he helped her much."

"I do not like men with influence," said Rudi.

"As long as Paul was alive—no!" said Wanda. "But now I think she will say yes. I think perhaps they are going to Davos. It is beautiful in Davos. Now I go shopping."

Rudi and Mackenzie remained sitting for a time. "What about this Conrad, Rudi?"

"You will see."

"I gather you don't like him."

Rudi shrugged. "He is very smart. Lili is a very pretty girl—and Conrad is fond of pretty girls. I think maybe he did all he could to help Paul—but afterward he might expect much gratitude."

"You don't trust him?"

"Oh—yess!" He looked across the square as if he were gauging the weight of the building opposite. "Chust as far as I can throw the *Postamt*."

Lili came through the arch of the square, smiling, dressed for a party.

"I thought you might not come."

"But of course I come! It is for the last time. Tonight we make a tour of all the places we like."

Finally they came to the stone bridge and leaned there breathing the cool sweet smell of the mountain water.

"I hear your friend has arrived."

"Conrad? You will meet him tomorrow."

"And I will not like him. Lili, something has happened." He turned to watch her dark head against a moonlit wall. "I have fallen in love. Not holiday love, not just being in love with an old house. You are everything I hope to find in a girl, Lili."

"That is sweet, Mackenzie, but it is not sensible. It would be easy to love you—you are gay like us, and generous and good, I think, but I will not do it—a girl with half a heart. With Conrad all is different; he knows about me, and I owe him much. You could never understand this, because we live in different worlds, but it is settled. We are to go to Switzerland tomorrow night."

"Lili, you are a cloth-head."

"First I am a sausage, then I am a cloth-head. With the Canadians, it is always politeness!"

NEXT morning they waited in the yard of the cable railway station. The sunshine was brilliant; all the world was waiting to go up. Lili was late. Toni grew apprehensive. "We shall miss our car."

The Lancia drove into the yard. Lili got out quickly and waved to them. The man with her was tall and brown-skinned, very striking in his black ski clothes. He carried himself

with an assurance very close to arrogance, one of the officer class, accustomed to the best of everything, including women. At the sight of him, Mackenzie felt a rush of male jealousy, strong as adrenalin.

Lili introduced him. "Toni you know, and Wanda and Rudi. And this is Mackenzie, Conrad Kellner."

Kellner spoke to them all. "But why are we speaking English? Oh, yes—Mackenzie. Why is it, Mackenzie, that Americans never bother to learn the language of Europe?"

"*Nous parlons français, si vous desirez*. It is also a language of Europe." He shouldered his skis. "Pick up your feet, Kellner; we've been waiting long enough."

Rudi giggled. There was a happy expression on his face, as if he were telling himself he was going to enjoy this.

The cable car, packed to the doors, lifted them up the wooded cliffs to the Hahnenkamm. As they fastened their skis on top, Lili knelt beside him.

"The morning is beautiful; we should not spoil it by quarreling."

"Any time is a good time to quarrel with that fellow."

"Mackenzie, you are rude!"

Kellner came over to them.

"I was asking Lili if you have skied before," Mackenzie said. "Or do you just wear those things for the effect?"

Kellner looked him over in a supercilious way, frosty amusement in his hard blue eyes. It was quite clear that neither liked the other. "I tell you how it is, Mackenzie. Today, as you say in English, we separate the man from the boy."

Beyond the Hahnenkamm there are waves of great crests like polar seas. They chose to go to the Weiss-horn. Toni, who as the instructor, was professionally responsible for the safety of the party, protested somewhat.

"Iss difficult. We shall have to be careful. There is avalanche snow on the shoulder."

THEY made their way up the great flank, six dots in a white immensity. Among the rock teeth of the crest, the snow was old and dead as salt; but to the east, away from the sun and wind, it was stuff to excite the heart. Toni pointed out the unpacked masses poised above the valley.

"We will do the crest run," said Kellner. "I lead."

They plunged down the great scallops below the top—miles of unmarked snow. Mackenzie found reason to dislike Kellner more—not only was he a first-class skier; he was a first-class mountaineer. He led them expertly, avoiding the avalanche slopes, dropping down in wide traverses.

They stopped to catch their breath. Kellner looked around, his teeth flashing in his brown face. "Is good?"

"Wunderbar!" Wanda waved her goggles. "Conrad, you are a great leader. You know," she said, inviting Mackenzie's enthusiasm. "Conrad has served with an Alpine regiment and with the frontier patrols—the best skiers in the world!"

Kellner grinned at him. "I tell you that today we separate the man from the boy."

"Now you stop, you're scaring me to death," said Mackenzie in a little girl's voice, and Lili gave him a reproachful look.

"I lead, Toni?"

"No, no, Mackenzie, you are too reckless—"

BUT he was gone, and the others followed. There are days when the snow is powder-light, when the air is filled with snowshine, sunshine and a dazzle of blue, when skiing seems more like flying than an earth-bound motion. Such days went to Mackenzie's head like wine. He brought his knees together and came winging down in graceful curves. He spied a cornice, a great shelf of snow, and came down on it at an angle which launched them out into space.

Wanda screamed all the way down and collapsed in snow up to her neck. Rudi fell and rolled a hundred feet and brought down tons of snow with him. They had to dig him out. Everyone scolded Mackenzie but Lili.

"Mackenzie, you ski like a bird!" she cried, her eyes flashing.

"You should be more careful," said Kellner austere. "Now I lead."

He led them, then Mackenzie led. The little party was swept down the great slope in a ding-dong battle of leadership. At noon, Wanda dropped into a hollow and took off her rucksack.

"Never have I had such skiing! It will do me for some time, thank you."

Rudi fell down beside her, his legs shaking. "Something to trink, quickly! Up there, I gif myself up again and again. No more Rudi, I say, poor Rudi, he is finished!"

They ate their lunch in the snow. Afterward Lili came to where Mackenzie lay a little apart, resting.

"My foolish Mackenzie, would you break our necks?"

"Only his leg."

"He also is brave, and my friend. Can you not be friends?"

He would not look at her face, with its serious friendly eyes and the sweet modeling of the cheekbones.

"Lili, you are a cloth-head."

They made a long day of it. The sun was down and the trails deserted when they came to the last steep run down to Kitzbühel.

"I vill neffer do it," said Rudi. "Neffers shall see the hot supper and the hot bed again." Toni, you must shoot me and leave me here."

"You must shoot me also, Toni," said Wanda. "I say to my legs—turn here! And they say back to me—'Oah, no!'"

"Very well," said Toni, "we rest. Below it iss icy."

Mackenzie skied to a knoll which commanded a view of the valley. The forest clung to the steep slopes like a dark mantle; ice falls on the rocks gleamed like fangs. To the right of the main trail, a narrow white ribbon fell down through the trees: The race trail of Der Streifen. He pictured in his mind how the boys would run it—straight down, stepping from foot to foot, like a man running headlong down a steep stairway. Very difficult; it scared him to think about it.

Lili joined him. "You are going away tonight?"

"At midnight. And you."

"Earlier. On the sleeper train for Switzerland."

"You are wrong, Lili."

"Very likely. One cannot always have life on one's own terms. Good-by, Mackenzie. Thank you for so much fun."

"Good-by, Lili."

KELLNER came over to him. If he had not come at that moment, it might not have happened, but he did come, big and superior. He pointed down.

"That is the famous Stripe. But such *Schusses* are not for you."

"Why, you got a mortgage on it?"

"One must be born among the mountains to run such places. I myself have run it a number of times."

"I suppose the main difficulty is old ladies getting in the way."

Kellner boiled over, his breath came out of him in a hiss. "So! You treat everything with bad jokes! It is not funny, my friend. Let us settle this account now. I will race you down."

Mackenzie knew it was a challenge to a contest more dangerous than a duel with sabers or pistols. And he was tired and stiff from the day's exercise. He had no intention of trying to run it. He looked at Kellner, and his temper came up in a sudden blaze.

"All right, Sauerkraut, get going."

The upper traverses had been carved into tunnels of ice by the day's traffic. Before he was well under way, he knew he was in for serious trouble—fatigue had spoiled his coordination. He tried to pull himself together; the mouth of the ice *Schuss* rose at him. He stepped desperately among the uneven hummocks; one lifted him; one threw him like a sling; there was air under his skis. Then he struck,

and his legs could no longer take the strain. Falling, he could not fall. The ice shouldered him out and down; he turned over in a tangle of legs and skis, and a sudden jagged flash of light hit him over the head. . . .

Toni got to him, where he was held in a drift among the trees.

"Can you move? Are you much broken?"

He was not broken. He was giddy, but he could move.



"My foolish Mackenzie, would you break our necks?"
"Only his leg."

"We go to Conrad. His binding broke. He iss much hurt."

The doctor sent Mackenzie to bed and told him to keep quiet. He fell asleep at once, and awoke a few hours later, feeling much better. Rudi was limping about the room.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nussing iss the matter with me—I haf been skiing, that iss all. What a sport! It should be put down by law. Here are you in a concussion, and Kellner is tied to a pillow with sticks, and he has two black eyes. If it were not serious, I would laugh."

"Where is Lili?"

"She has gone to the square to get pills for your head. She iss angry with you. Everything is spoiled."

There was a commotion in the hall. They heard her steps, running. She burst in on them, breathless, wildly excited.

"He is alive! He is coming!" She threw herself on Mackenzie, shaking him. "Do you hear—he is coming!"

Rudi dragged her off. "Iss bad for the concussion."

"Paul is alive—he is coming! Read!"

Rudi took the telegram and read it. Mackenzie did not need to read it, for it was all written in Lili's face.

"It iss from Paul, and he iss coming. Goot, that iss very goot indeed. So it is lucky you did not take the train to Switzerland."

"Mackenzie," she cried, "I was so angry with you! And now I am so grateful! You are glad for me?"

She held out her hand to him. There is no mistaking the radiance of true love. Her eyes danced; her cheeks shone—all for the man who had sent the telegram. Well, he would get over it, but it would take a little time—one took these risks on a holiday. Somewhere, he felt sure, there was another girl waiting for him, with dark eyes and cheekbones just as lovely—and maybe an inch taller.

"You see," he said, "everything turns out for the best in Kitzbühel."

A STORY WHEREIN WE SEE OURSELVES
AS OTHERS OF A FAR FUTURE TIME
MAY SEE US.

Clouds over

by WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT

"OUR revered, if unknown, ancestors," the Professor said, "were American. To trace the turbulent history of that irrational people, would be beyond the ambitions of this course. We have managed, in Elysium, to retain all that was good from that civilization, and one yardstick which is neither good nor bad, but rather—handy. This is *time*, a four-letter word for measured change. According to the diary of Doctor Hemper, it was A.D. 1960, in the month of August, when the graviturb left America with the seeds of our civilization aboard."

The Professor glanced mildly around the room, to see how many of his charges were asleep. Not that he cared, particularly, because Professor Alduous Richter was a man who loved the sound of his own voice.

None was asleep; all seemed interested. The Professor was silent a moment, in shock, and then went on:

"As we all know, World, of which America was a part, erupted because

of its own self-conflict in September of that year, left its orbit and destroyed itself in space. We come, now, to some controversial matter."

The Professor drew himself a little more erectly and seemed to be mentally girding his loins. The Professor had *his* views on this matter and Professor Darling had *his*. He would give them Professor Darling's today, and save his own for tomorrow.

"The graviturb, according to Doctor Hemper, cruised for months, through many galaxies, seeking one in which planet's orbit they desired to inhabit, in which planet's orbit, I repeat, around its sun would most nearly approximate this World they had deserted. They did this for reasons not clear, but probably because they had an undue regard for measured change, or time. Fourteen galaxies from Minus, they came upon this planetoid and named it Elysium. They settled here and began to—They were the seed."

In his chair, two chairs from Sue, Lance yawned—but stifled it as the Professor looked sharply his way. Lance knew what was coming: he'd read it all when he was four. He'd really only taken the course to be near Sue. He could take a lot to be near Sue.

"This," the Professor went on, "this foregoing, is not controversial. What follows is. It is the scholarly opinion of Professor Little Darling, a man esteemed by all." Here the Professor smiled at Lance.

Lance was the son of Professor Little Darling. He smiled back. Lance had a mechanical aptitude rating of 2736, and there may have been some condescension in the smile.

"Professor Darling has delved rather deeply into the history of America, brought in the graviturb among the tons of microfilm. There are rather complete accounts, in this history, of a section of America called Texas. It is Professor Darling's earnest belief that, because of certain geographical similarities and almost exact similarities in dimension, Elysium is Texas."

The Professor paused, his smile tolerant, but there was no doubt in his listener's minds, what *he* thought of that theory.

In his chair, Lance sat up, his eyes grave on the Professor. Sue glanced at him worriedly and chewed her scriptus. Uncle Alduous resented Lance's presence, she knew. Uncle Alduous had a much higher I.Q. than Lance but his mechanical aptitude rating was only 2301.

And Lance was so—so impulsive, so —almost combative, at times.

Professor Alduous Richter's voice was now openly scornful. "Professor Darling's assertion rests in part on the statement of a World Strife-Man, named General Sherman. The Strife-Man has said: 'If I had to choose between Texas and hell, it wouldn't be Texas.' Hell, according to our research, seems to be a section of America called South Dakota. Now, further asserts my esteemed colleague, if Texas isn't hell, it must be heaven. There seemed to be only the two, in America. Elysium is the mythological term for heaven; and those on the graviturb, though of admitted intelligence, still had some mythological mental remnants from their youth, claims my colleague, and—"

Lance's hand went up.

The Professor paused, annoyed. His glance was steady. "Yes, Mr. Darling?"

Sue looked down at her tab-ra, full of scriptus doodles. She could feel the color flooding her cheeks, and that old sense of loyalty, family loyalty which her uncle had tried to eliminate. She couldn't help it; she was an old-fashioned girl. But Lance, too, had a strange pull for her, beyond matemoood.

Oh, if they wouldn't always quarrel!

"With due respect, sir," Lance said quietly, "for your superior I.Q. and higher know-strata, I would like to submit the belief that you are not giving my father's views complete and unbiased expression."

The Professor flinched. The class gasped. At the Professor's know-strata, there was only one loyalty—to Truth. To attack that, however obliquely, was to attack the entire fabric of the individual's integrity.

In her seat, Sue quivered, torn between outmoded loyalties.

Professor Richter was white, and he put a hand on the railing which



The Cloud had taken on a significance which dimmed all pleasures.

Elysium

Illustrated by STUART HAY

fronted the rostrum. His mouth opened, and closed.

Finally it opened again, and he said hoarsely: "I must ask you to leave, Mr. Darling. I must ask you never to return to this classroom again."

"It is very little that you ask, sir," Lance said coldly. "I will be glad to oblige."

He paused then, before he turned. He looked directly at Sue, his blue eyes seeming to dig into her mind. The pull had never been stronger. Why, oh, why did she have to be so old-fashioned? Why loyalty, of all the ancient vices?

Then Lance turned and walked from the room. His chin was out, his shoulders back, like an ancient Strife-Man's.

Two minutes later she left, seeking him.

She found him in the Culture-Reco, in the American hall of the Culture-Reco.

THERE was a new display behind the quartz. It was a wax figure of a man, screaming in rage, a bottle of something in one hand, a sausage sandwich in the other. On his contorted face was a look of pure venom.

Underneath, the simple inscription read: *Dodger Rooter, Late American Democratic Dynasty.*

Her voice was humble. "Your father arranged this new display?"

He nodded, not looking at her.

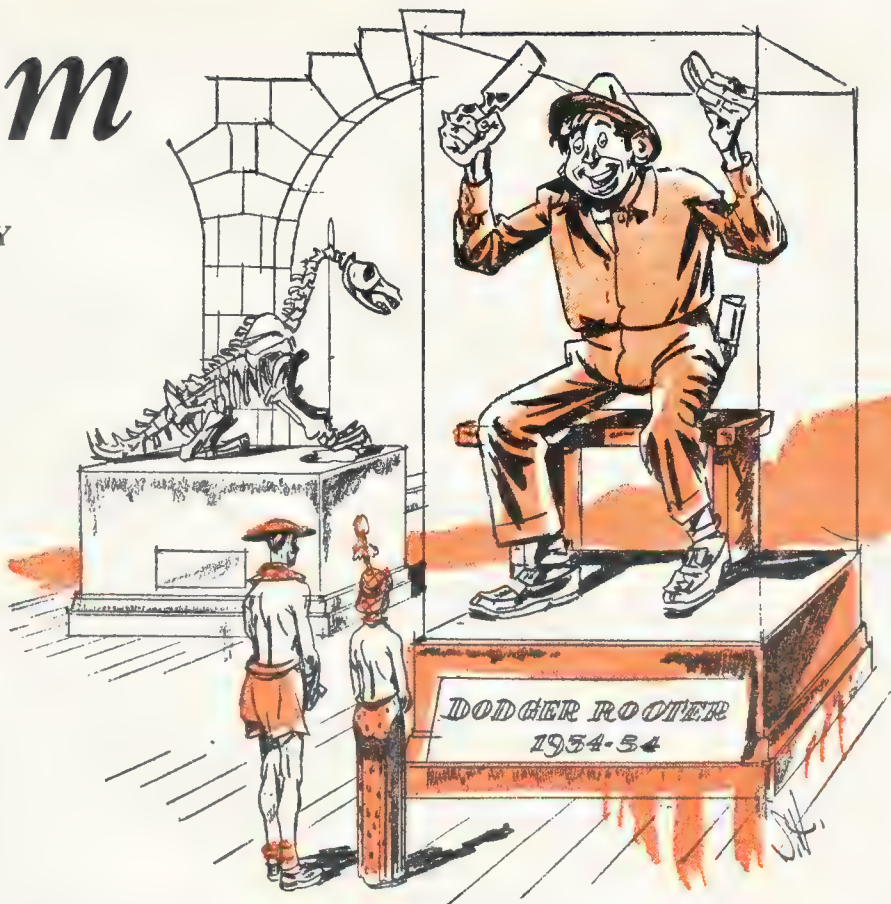
"Would—would you explain it to me?"

He still didn't look at her. His voice was a robot's voice, almost. "According to the most prolific American historian, Advertising Man, the conflict which preceded the last local conflict on World was fought for a single purpose, by the Americans. This objective, according to Advertising Man, was the right to root the Dodgers."

"What does that mean—Dodgers?"

"Men who evaded the draft, according to Father. That would be men who stayed out of the wind. Because they were rooted, probably, they couldn't blow away, and—oh, it's not very clear."

"But this—this image?"



"What does Dodger mean?" "Man who evaded the draft, according to Father."

"It was lifted from a group photograph labeled *Dodger Rooters.*" Now he turned to face her, and his blue eyes were again probing. "Sue, Sue, Sue—" he said. "Oh, dearest!"

Then his arms were around her, and moods mingled in her midriff. She clung to him desperately, and the image of her uncle faded, and there was only the warm, single loyalty in her for the moment.

She pulled away, finally. "If you had scored ten more points on your strata-test, you wouldn't be permitted that. You would have been at a know-strata level where love is forbidden."

"You forget," he said, "that I took the test after I met you. Dearest, I helped my uncle devise that particular test."

"Lance, you—" She stared at him. "Where is your loyalty to Truth? Lance, that's—cheating—"

"I have only the one answer," he said. "I love you."

"I love you too, Lance."

"But I want you to be mine alone, Sue."

Again she stared at him. "Alone? That would be loyalty, Lance. That would be a sin."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Of course. I—oh, Lance, damn you, dearest!"

She was once more in his arms, burned by the mood.

They went out, finally, and as soon as they were clear of the building, both pairs of eyes sought the Cloud.

It had been there, now, for two months, a black, ominous and unquestionably evil thing. There had been many theories regarding it, none of them pleasant. In the lives of the Elysians it had come to take on a significance which dimmed all their pleasures.

The best minds on the planetoid were concerned with it, twenty-four hours a day. All the scholars were being kept under Lucidate, awake and fresh every minute around the clock. None had come up with a solution.

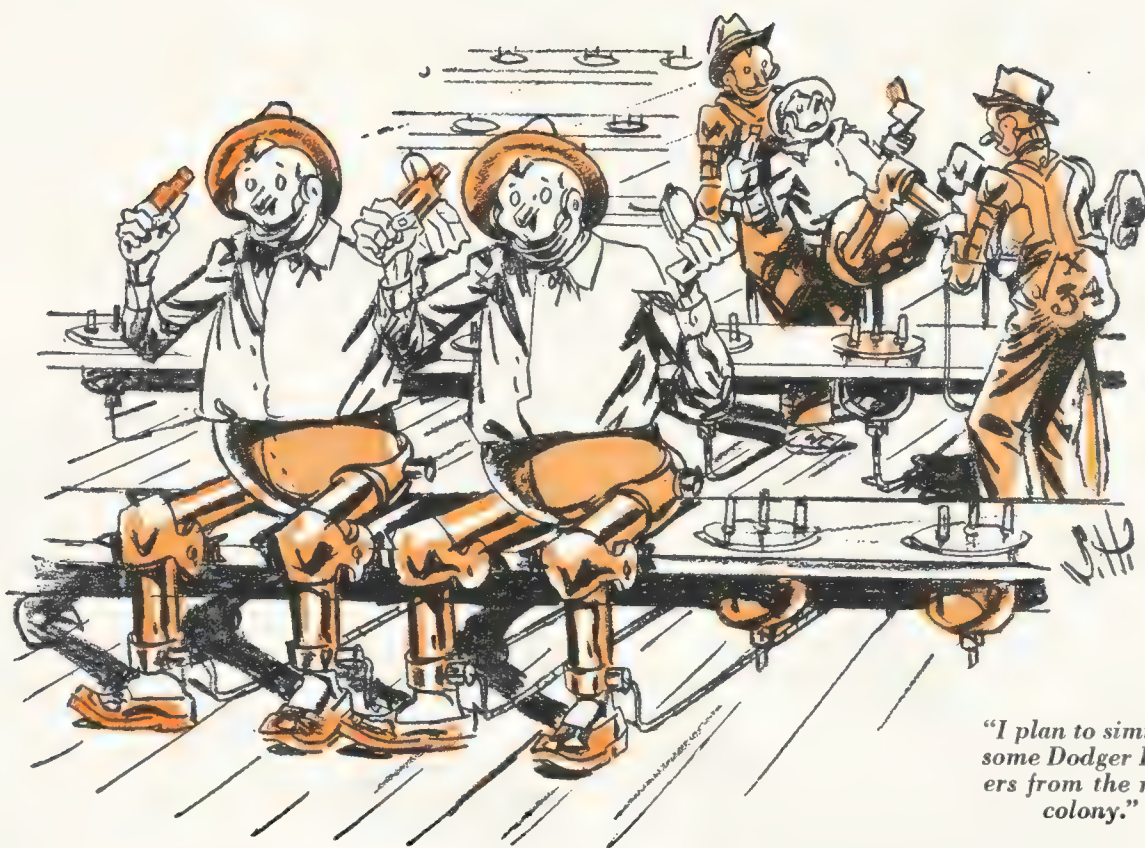
"I wish," Sue said now, "it would go away."

"It won't."

She stopped walking. "Lance, the way you said that. Do you know what—"

"Father knows. I'm sure he knows. He says it won't go away."

"Your father knows? But if he knows, the Center knows. He's working with the Center, isn't he?"



"I plan to simulate some Dodger Rooters from the robot colony."

"So is your uncle."

"Lance, you're not making sense—"

"Yes, I am. It would just start another controversy. My father, believe it or not, is a peace-loving man. He wants no more controversies. Unlike your uncle, he is almost completely without ego, and not obsessed with a desire for Center Awards."

Now her voice was firm: "Lance, as a Knowledge-Seeking-Maiden, I demand to know."

(For those readers who are still back in that ridiculous 1951, a Knowledge-Seeking-Maiden is the new D.A.R.—with oomph.)

"Demand?" Lance said. "Dearest, you'd demand of my father?"

"Not of your father. Of you, Lance."

"I don't know. Father hasn't confided in me."

"He'd confide in me, I'll bet."

"Don't be silly," he said.

"Would you like to bet me two credits?"

"Dearest, please! Why, you're not even at the Minor Genius level, if you'll pardon my frankness. Why, Dad—"

"Is twice as bright and not nearly as stuffy as his son. Let's go and see him, shall we? He's so much fun."

That he was. He looked like two apples, though with appendages, of course. A round little body and a round little head and a twinkle in his eyes that intimated he might be sorry he'd reached his know-strata where love was barred.

His name was unfortunate. The day he'd been born, his mother had said: "Why, he's a little darling."

The very next day, when he'd started school, his teacher had asked him his name, and he realized his mother had forgotten to tell him, in the confusion of his birth.

But he was not a lad to lack an answer, even at the age of twenty-nine hours. He had looked the teacher squarely in the eye and said: "Little Darling."

It had gone into the milli-reco like that, and been processed at the cognomen-coördinator. Because of a time lag from the hospital, it had gained the priority, and was therefore official.

He was in his marble laboratory this May morning, gazing moodily out at his garden.

At sight of Sue, he smiled warmly. "Hubba-hubba," he said.

"What's that?" she asked him. "Is it one of the dead languages?"

"American," he told her. "You're beautiful, this morning, Sue. You're always beautiful. If I were at a different level, and younger, if Lance wasn't so—"

"Professor Darling," Sue interrupted, "you know about the cloud, don't you?"

The Professor looked at Lance and frowned. He looked at Sue and sighed. "Yes," he said quietly, "I know about the cloud. I'm quite sure I know about the cloud."

"What is it?" she asked. Her lips were parted, and she was looking at

the Professor with all the voltage of her pottery-brown eyes. Who could deny her?

"Texans," the Professor said. "Atomized Texans, seeking their home."

There was a long and pregnant silence.

It gave birth, finally, to a groan from Lance. "Dad, you're not— Is it because of the controversy with Professor Richter you have this Texas complex?"

Sue waved Lance to silence. Her eyes hadn't left the Professor's grave face. "Is that bad, Professor Darling? Are these Texans—"

The Professor looked away, and his voice was dead. "From all I've read, I'm afraid they are. Some Americans considered them more obnoxious than Californians, and they were a very obnoxious tribe."

"Californians?" Sue said vaguely. "What are they? Uncle Alduous never told me about Californians."

THE Professor's voice was gentle. "Child, what your Uncle Alduous knows about history wouldn't fill two medium-sized libraries. Your uncle seems to think there were only two tribes in America; most real authorities agree there were five or six, including the Dodger Rooters."

"And—Texans, Professor, were they warlike?"

"That they were. I've studied the complete writings of many American historians: Zane Grey, Max Brand, Ernest Haycox, all dealt with those

Western American tribes. What surprises me is the size of that cloud."

"You mean—there weren't that many Texans?"

"There shouldn't have been. They were constantly shooting each other with something called pistols, and the wounds were invariably fatal. I've put all the writings of the Western historians through the compto-reduco-determino, and the tape showed there should be no more than seven Texans alive at the time of World's end. However," and he shrugged, "historians—"

SUE's voice was but a whisper. "Warlike—warlike. . . . That was what destroyed World, wasn't it, Professor? It was war?"

He nodded mutely, looking out at his garden.

"And you're sure, Professor Darling, that the cloud is—" She closed her eyes.

The Professor hesitated a moment, his eyes bleak. Then he went to a cabinet and brought out a transparent plastic disk. He put it on a machine he had rigged on the table.

It was not audio-music but mento-music, reaching the brain without benefit of eardrum. It was strange music, sung in a strained, nasal voice to the accompaniment of a stringed and out-of-tune instrument.

Sue heard:

*When I go down the trail,
All alone without that frail
I'm low as old Zero's tail
I might as well be back in jail
When I—*

But now the Professor was motioning them outside, where they could see the cloud.

The cloud was keeping time to the music! Up and down, back and forth, like some monstrous elephantine ballet.

It was Lance who rushed back into the laboratory and snapped off the machine.

Sue and the Professor went in, and Lance was standing there, breathing hard, staring at his father. "Dad, you had no right. Without the permission of the Center, you had no right to tamper with a force so destructive."

"Haven't I? I've a number called 'Lone Star Buckaroo' that will really send that cloud, if you'll pardon the American idiom. Who among all the supposed intellects in our sphere, who was it that first declared Elysium is Texas?"

"You, Father," Lance admitted. "It is your original theory."

"Correct." The Professor's round little face was firm and without humor. "And there are some rather highly esteemed gentlemen who still

do not accept my theory. That cloud, Lance Darling, is my proof."

"Dad!" Lance said, horrified. "Dad, you aren't thinking of—"

"I've been thinking of it, Lance. If that be treason, make the most of it. *But I've been thinking of it.*"

Sue was looking from one to the other, her face blank. Finally, she said, "I know I'm not as bright as I should be, but just what is it the professor has been thinking of?"

"Treason," Lance said. "That's what I'd call it."

"I wouldn't," the Professor said mildly. "I'd call it a re-integrator. And I've the equipment, right here, to make one."

"Re-integrator?" Sue asked, looking puzzled. "I—haven't the mechanical aptitude I should have, but isn't that a machine to rebuild smashed molecules?"

"Atoms," the Professor corrected her. "Those Texans up there, for instance."

Now Sue understood. She stared at the mild little man, speechless.

"That's what the cloud is waiting for," Lance told her quietly: "for some—some traitor here on Elysium, to build them a re-integrator."

"Traitor?" The Professor's voice was still even. "I can be disloyal only

to Truth. I can be a traitor only to Truth. Try again, Lance."

Lance looked at Sue. "Both of us have said too much already." He walked out, and into the garden.

Sue watched him, and turned back to the Professor. "Would you do this—thing? Would you let loose those—Texans on us, destroy all that we have built, here in Elysium?"

HE smiled, and again his eyes were kind. "Of course not, dear. I'm not that much in love with my opinions or with Truth." He nodded toward the garden. "Lance just—brings out the worst in me, at times. He's really brighter than I am, you know."

"He can be trying," Sue admitted. "But he's so handsome, and impetuous."

The Professor said nothing.

"But your poor old theory!" Sue said sympathetically. "The re-integrator would prove your theory, wouldn't it? And if those Texans weren't warlike, it wouldn't matter. Would they dance, if they were malignant?"

He nodded. "The American Dust-biters, or Redskins as they were commonly called, *always* went into a dance before their wars. And even if the Texans aren't warlike, they are ob-



"The stands will not require more than a day of robot labor."

noxious. All the historians agree on that."

"If you could re-integrate just one, and we had a defense against him—"

"Defense? In Elysium? What do we know of war? We are a cultural people. In all Elysium there is not a single weapon."

Sue was silent.

Now, Lance came back in. "Father, it's time for your Lucidate. Another session at the Center tonight, you know."

"I won't drink another drop of the stuff," the Professor asserted. "I know what the cloud is. There's no reason for me to stay awake any longer. I've been awake, now, for two months."

LANCE, for a change, didn't argue. He said: "All right, Father. I'll go in your place. I'll tell them what you've told us here, this morning."

"And be laughed at?"

"And be laughed at, if need be," Lance said stiffly.

The Professor smiled. "All right. You haven't been laughed at for a long time, Lance. I'm sure it's just what you need. And now, if you two will pardon me, I'm going to take a nap."

"I think I will too," Lance added. "You don't mind, Sue?"

"No," Sue said. "I think I'll go home and take one too."

But when Sue got home, her uncle was there, talking to her father.

Her uncle was saying: "Rank impertinence, that's what it was. I won't tolerate it, Julian, not from a—*a creature of his know-strata.*"

Her father was a regent at the Academy and active in educational affairs.

He turned, now, to smile at Sue. "Ah, here our girl is. Where have you been, dear?"

"With the Darlings. Is something wrong, Father?"

"Your Uncle Alduous is perturbed. You walked out of his class, dear."

"The mood was on me," she explained. "I had to see Lance."

"Lance?" Uncle Alduous's eyebrows lifted. "But you were with both of them."

Sue gazed steadily at her uncle. "Yes, I was. I learned what the cloud is—from Professor Darling."

"No doubt." Alduous sniffed. "What is his latest theory? Perhaps these are disintegrated Texans, seeking their ancestral home." He chuckled. "Not bad, eh, Julian? Rather clever."

"Not at all bad," Sue answered for her father. "Lance will explain his father's theory, at the Center, tonight. The Professor has gone to sleep."

"Sleep?" Both men stared at her. Her father half rose from his chair. "Did you say *sleep*?"

"That's what I said. Now that the Professor knows what the cloud is, there was no further need for Lucidate. He's gone to sleep. And that's what I'm going to do, if you two will excuse me."

"I could stand a wink or two myself," Julian said. "What say, Alduous?"

"I say it's treason," Alduous answered firmly. "I haven't the faith you two seem to have in the theories of Professor Little Darling. I bid you both good afternoon."

Julian yawned. "Good afternoon, Alduous. Don't take any spurious credits."

Sue went to her corner of the big room and turned on her invisible ray machine. Soon she was invisible, and asleep.

Above her quiet house, the cloud hovered, defying the winds and the sun, waiting, waiting, waiting. . . .

Above all the houses in Elysium, it hovered, darkening the lives of this people who had found an earthly heaven. In the Darling home, Lance slept, dreaming of Sue.

BUT Professor Little Darling could not sleep. The cloud was no threat to him; the cloud was recognition. Evil it might be, and destructive. But it would prove his theory; it would establish it as Truth.

Truth was his *only* loyalty, so read the strata-code of the Elysians. However, despite his devotion to Truth, the Professor had the misfortune to be a good guy. He loved his fellow-Elysians; he was a modern *Tiny Tim*. And to subject them to Texans—

He tossed; he turned. He considered taking an opiate or three pages of Professor Richter's "Dr. Hiram Hemper, Genius."

He rose, finally, and went to his laboratory. He wired up an anti-cyclotron he hadn't used for months. He put a new camshaft in his surgic-recovero, polished the ports on his vaco-windmaker. He worked at this with his conscious mind on another plane, unaware all these ingredients would be needed for a re-integrator.

Then, as he paused, seeking more work, he realized what he'd done. He gazed at each machine in slowly growing horror, and looked down at his hands in guilt.

He stood there for seconds, knowing his duty. But he hadn't the heart. He took a bottle of Bonded Ecstasy with him, and went out into the garden.

He was still there when Lance left for the Center. His active mind was working, working, working—seeking a universally beneficial answer to his dilemma.

He was still there when the first laugh came his way from the Center.

And then it grew, a horrible, raucous sound. The Professor reached over to snap on his sonic-muffle, but paused in the act.

That was his *son* they were laughing at. That was Lance Darling.

He stood up, a small, determined, angry man. He started for the Center.

The laughs had subsided by the time he reached it. In the huge marble Science Hall of the Center, Professor Alduous Richter had the floor.

"In a jesting reference to Professor Darling's latest assertion, gentlemen, I remarked to my niece that perhaps Professor Darling thought the cloud was composed of disintegrated Texans. I am not without humor, you see. I, however, could not have known, at the time, that this jest would evolve into another—Darling theory. I submit, gentlemen, that—"

From the doorway, Professor Darling called: "Would you submit to proof? Would you risk a Texan invasion in the interest of Truth, Professor Richter?"

There was a silence, all eyes on the doorway. No one laughed; no one murmured; no one even seemed to breathe.

Professor Darling was slowly making his way to the center of the hall, savoring the drama of the moment, relishing the silence. Where were their laughs now?

Lance sat in the first row, pride in his smile. Lance's young face was daring them to laugh.

Professor Richter said: "I surrender the floor momentarily to a further elucidation of Professor Darling's views."

PROFESSOR DARLING bowed to his colleague, and then looked slowly around the huge hall.

His voice was grave. "I have, in my laboratory, almost all the equipment necessary for a re-integrator. It lacks only a funnel for the receiving end. This will need to be a big funnel, larger, even, than my esteemed colleague's mouth."

He paused, waiting for the laugh that didn't come.

He went on, unperturbed: "It is my desire to set up this re-integrator on the plains beyond Hope, and to limit its action to the re-integration of *two* Texans. I want two because my research reveals they were extroverted and not given to talking to themselves. I want to hear what they say. I submit this for your consideration." He turned slowly, looking at them all. "Any questions?"

Dr. Alan Gone stood up. "One rather important one, Professor Darling: In the event your theory is correct, what defense has Elysium against two Texans?"

Professor Darling smiled, pausing enough to give his next words dramatic emphasis. "A very sure defense. Strife-Men who won the last war on World to be won by either side." He paused again, and threw it at them. "Dodger Rooters."

Murmurs, running through the illustrious crowd. Dr. Alan Gone was white-faced, and his voice only a whisper. "You—you also plan to re-integrate some Dodger Rooters?"

"Of course not, Doctor. I plan to simulate some, from the robot colony. I put that group photograph of Dodger Rooters through the compto-reduco-determino, and the tape showed there were forty-two thousand, nine hundred and eighty-one of them. Their warring cries are on record at the Sonic-Recovery Center. The stands in which they were seated would not require more than a day or two of robot labor. I want to erect those stands far enough from the re-integrator so that, as they make their way there, the Texans will have an opportunity to observe the terrain. Their comments will be my proof. On their comments, I stake my hard-won and highly valued reputation."

Again there was a silence.

AND NOW Professor Richter stood up. "Professor Darling, one small point which I, perhaps, shouldn't mention. But—what makes you think your—Texans will follow the path you have prescribed for them? How do we know they won't go—astray?"

"They are not only Texans; they are Americans," Professor Darling answered. "They will be guided by wishful thinking. I have incorporated a directed Wishful-Thinker into the re-integrator."

Again it was Dr. Alan Gone on his feet. "Professor, how sure are you of the—the warlike ability of these Dodger Rooters?"

"Only this—the record shows they were not even afraid of the Giants. Of the *Giants*, Dr. Gone, of Atlas and Paul Bunyan and Carnera—"

Dr. Alan Gone sat down.

Professor Darling looked around the hall. "Gentlemen, I ask for a vote on my proposal."

Around the great hall, the voices rose and fell. Professor Darling found a seat next to his son, waiting.

Lance said: "Father, if anything went wrong, it could be the end of Elysium."

"I'm aware of that, son. Nothing must go wrong."

In the center of the hall, the huge count-ray blinked on, and Dr. Alan Gone had the floor. He was the Center's director.

"Gentlemen, prepare to vote."

It was close. The count-ray moved in a slow circle, totaling the standees



One was tall and slim; the other short and slim. These were Texans.

twice, and then the results flashed on its board.

Dr. Little Darling's proposal had won—by three votes. . . .

Throughout Elysium the word went, and there was growing fear. On the plain beyond Hope, in the Thurbur section, the re-integrator was set up, guarded by blue-uniformed robots.

Among the ordinary people, fear was predominant. Even the brainier members of this vast and happy society had definite misgivings. Even Lance felt it. This could be his last two days on Elysium. He spent a lot of time with Sue, under the invisible ray, telling her all the things he hadn't had time to tell her, before.

Professor Alduous Richter went around with a perpetual smirk. After this farce was fully completed, after the absurdity of Professor Little Darling's major theory was established, he, Professor Alduous Richter, would be Mr. Big in Elysium. It was a warming thought.

Professor Darling worked like a robot. He installed reverse gears in the re-integrator. He personally directed the two-day rebuilding of Eb-bets Field, campaign grounds for the Dodger Rooters.

He ignored the mountain of mail from the ordinary people, knowing

the contents to be malicious and misguided.

Above them, the cloud waited and watched with cloudlike intensity, no doubt wondering at the number of traitors Elysium had produced.

At last, on the late afternoon of the second day, all was ready. In their seats were the 42,981 Dodger Rooter facsimiles, complete with vocal cords tuned to the recovered war-cry. Each was armed with the bottle and the sausage sandwich.

On the plain beyond Hope, the re-integrator was ready and in perfect mechanical order.

There was only one flaw, and that was not known to the intellectuals before the machine was turned on. The animosity-instiller was out of venom. There was no hate and no desire for war in the Dodger Rooter robots.

Above them the cloud moved, edging toward the plain.

The universal sonic-muffle was on; only the recorders would pick up the dialogue, if any. There were words in the ancient American writings that only the intellectuals knew. They were, not words the intellectuals wanted the decent, clean citizens of Elysium to hear. And Texans were Americans, more or less.

The cloud moved closer to the funnel; and the first phase, the vaco-

windmaker, went into whirring action. A section of the cloud disappeared into the funnel.

At the switches, Professor Little Darling said into his microphone. "Everything ready at your end, Lance?"

Lance was at Ebbets Field, the robot director. His voice came through the box at the Professor's side: "All set, Dad. Good luck."

The Professor threw another switch, and the grind of the anti-cyclotron shook the ground beneath him.

Then Sue was standing next to him. The sonic-muffle stilled her voice, but the Professor read her lips.

"If you are proved right, Professor, remember my uncle is a good man, and old. Do not shame him too much."

He smiled at her and mouthed: "Dearest Sue, he is *your* uncle. I will go easy on him."

And now the surgic-recovero light was flashing, and the dial which had been set at 2, worked slowly down to zero.

From the chute, at the far end of the integrator, two men slid to the cushioned floor.

ONE was tall and slim; the other was short and slim. Both wore blue denim pants, tight across the buttocks and faded cotton shirts, formerly blue. Both had identical tags hanging from their shirt pockets with the image of a bull on the tags. Both wore dirty

wide-brimmed hats. Both were bow-legged.

Tanned, slim men with thin lips and faded blue eyes, saying nothing, for the moment. Professor Little Darling took a deep breath of relief. *He* knew Texans. And these were Texans.

Into the microphone, he said to Lance: "Truth is triumphant."

But from the box at his side, Lance's stricken voice sent shivers through the Professor.

"Father, Father, someone has forgotten to fill the venom reservoirs!"

"Get some," the Professor said hoarsely. "They're on the way down there, now, Lance. In the name of Truth, get some venom."

"It's too late," Lance said. "There's no fresh venom. Perhaps the noise will do it. Snap off the sonic-muffle, if they come too close to us. Their words won't be heard above the warping cries."

They were talking now, the Texans. Their lips were moving, and the recorders would register every word.

Sue, still standing next to the Professor, mouthed: "What's happened at the field? Is Lance in danger?"

The Professor nodded without looking at her, his eyes on the Texans. He said: "It doesn't matter. Truth is triumphant."

"It matters to me," Sue screamed soundlessly. "I love the jerk. If you'll pardon the American idiom. I want to be with him."



"Mi Gawd, Podner, them ain't Texans. What are they?"

The Professor watched her take off, his thoughts on Lance. It did matter to him, what happened to Lance, but he'd learned, long ago, to accept the inevitable.

If the illusion didn't work, Lance would be among the first to go. Dodger Rooters, without venom, were no match for Texans, even 42,981 of them. Robots without venom were working robots, and no good for war at all.

The illusion must work.

CLOSER the two walked, and they were no longer talking. A slouching deadliness was apparent now, in their approach to Ebbets Field.

Soon now, the Professor guessed, the Texans would be saying: "Reach for the sky, you varmint."

And what would happen then?

Closer, closer, closer to the field the Texans walked. Along their path, under the invisible ray, the other intellectuals of Elysium watched, blissfully unaware of the lack of venom.

Now they were no more than fifty feet from the huge bowl.

The Professor took a deep breath and reached over to snap off the universal sonic-muffle.

The cries, the shrieks, the screams that filled the suddenly alive air made the Professor sorry he hadn't sacrificed Lance.

"Kill da bum! Where's your white cane, you &%\$#" drip! You want my hat to catch dem pop flies in, you #"\$%! Give 'em a tennis racket!"

All around them, in the dusk, the chilling cries of the Dodger Rooters disturbed the distraught air. Overhead, the cloud seemed to shiver, and the end of it was trying to pull away from the funnel entry.

But way down at the bowl, the Texans had paused, facing each other. The taller one said something, and now they were running this way.

Running, stumbling, scrambling back toward the re-integrator. Their high heels gave them trouble, but they were really making time.

Straight for the chute they ran, scratching at its polished surface, trying to climb back in.

Smilingly, the Professor leaned over to depress the new reverse lever. The chute lifted, and the Texans slid back into the reverse mechanism.

The Professor watched the cloud. And when the last murmur from the anti-cyclotron had died away, so had the cloud. One millit it was there; the next millit, it was gone. At a rough guess, the Professor estimated its removal speed at 721½ times the speed of light. Which is fast, for a cloud.

He rubbed the back of his neck and took a deep breath of air. He wondered how many of the indignant ordi-



The Professor could remember that terror-stricken flight into the re-integrator

nary people were sorry they'd sent the letters, now. He wondered if the Center would devise a new Super-Award. He wondered what the Texans had said.

AN hour later, in the Inner-Circle Room of the Center, he found out. Lance was there, and Sue, but they were in a corner, and not visible. All of the Inner-Circle were there, but not Professor Richter. Ignorant as he was of history, Professor Richter knew a Texan when he saw one, and he'd just seen two.

Dr. Gone was smiling. "Well, our cloud is gone, thanks to Professor Darling. May I be the first to admit I had some doubts? May I be the first to apologize?"

"No apologies are due, Doctor," the Professor said magnanimously. "It is only through an earnest appraisal of diverse opinions that we may arrive at Truth."

"Thank you, Professor. And now, the transcriptions."

From the corner of the room, Lance's voice said: "This I've got to hear." He became visible, and waved at his father.

His father waved back, searching for Sue, but she was still under the invisible ray.

Dr. Gone was arranging the disks. "They were brothers, I guess. In any event, they shared the name Podner." He snapped a switch.

From the speaker above the rostrum, there was a scratching sound, a squeal, and then: "One, two, three, four—testing. One, two, three, four, testing." Then there was silence.

Then the whir, the thump, the grind of the re-integrator and the double thump of two men hitting the cushioned floor. Silence.

Then: "Podner, this is it. It just can't be nothing else."

The other voice: "Podner, I don't know. Maybe— But where's the neon? Where's the oil wells and the geeters? Where's there a saloon, Podner?"

"Ain't no saloons this far out. Look at that sage, Podner, and smell that air. It ain't red enough for Oklahoma. Podner, I will bet you seventeen silver dollars that this is Texas. If this ain't Texas, what the hell is it?"

In his chair, Professor Darling relaxed.

The other voice said: "It ain't Texas. Maybe it *was* Texas, once, but it sure as hell ain't Texas now."

Silence, and then the other voice: "Hey, Podner, what's that daown there? Ain't that the Cotton Bowl?"

"Never saw the Cotton Bowl. We could go daown and find out. Sure ought to be a sign on it, if it's the Cotton Bowl. Neon sign."

Silence, except for the sound of their high heels on the hard ground of the plain.

Then, the blast of the Dodger Rooters, and it was dimmed, so the recorders could pick up the voices.

FRIGHT, now, in the first voice. "My Gawd, Podner, them ain't Texans. They've taken over our country. And that ain't the Cotton Bowl, not by a damn sight. Podner, what are they?"

"I was there once, just once, with a load of cattle. It's the most awful place in the world. Podner, they desecrated our country. Podner, this is now Brooklyn!"

"No, no, no—"

And then the scramble of their feet, and the Professor could remember that terror-stricken flight. Then the reversed jangle of the re-integrator, and silence once again.

All were quiet. Sue was again visible, arranging her hair.

It was Dr. Alan Gone who voiced it for all of them. "Thank Truth," he said, "for Professor Little Darling. Thank Truth that we live *today*, in Elysium!"

Too Much



They worked a while, then stopped for beer. After lunch they worked again, but one by one they put aside their tools and gathered in a group to talk, laugh and sing.

STANDING at the edge of a fragrant little tropical jungle of its own, the bungalow from a distance appeared to be admirably suited to John Peavey's needs. A cove with a reef across its entrance lay between the bungalow and the surging Pacific, and at the foot of the steps was a white sand beach lapped by whispering little waves. The walls of the bungalow were covered with the waxy green leaves and the flaming blossoms of a bougainvillea gone wild; but John Peavey's eyes saw through leaves and blossoms as an X ray sees through an inch of flesh.

The bungalow was built on eight-foot stilts, each resting on a stone

slab. The stilts, like skinny legs, were clad in a plank skirt lightly nailed on. The planks embraced the stilts, and the stilts held up the planks; and this carefree construction supported the platform on which the bungalow stood. It looked as if a hard gust of wind would send it sprawling.

"It's perfect," John said, "except that I'd be afraid of waking up some night fighting my way out of a mass of kindling wood."

Joe Kaulili, the owner, who was as plump and brown as a seal, thought that over for a moment, then roared with laughter. He argued that the bungalow had held together for almost fifty years, and was good for fifty

more. The lumber had come from the hull of a schooner wrecked on the reef around 1900; the planks had soaked in the sea for months, and as everybody knew, lumber soaked in sea water is not only termite-proof but practically petrified.

"Which nail," John asked him, "do you figure is the one that hasn't quite rusted through and is holding it up?"

Joe Kaulili thumped him affectionately on the back and told him he was one fine guy.

"You gonna get along fine," he told John. "You buildin' contractor State-side, ai?"

John wished he hadn't told the doctor all about himself. The less people

Aloha

by GEORGE WORTS

knew about you, the better; he'd talked too much. He didn't want people to be curious about him.

The skeletal stairway shook as the two men climbed to the screened veranda, or *lanai*. The *lanai* swayed and sagged as they walked to the front and looked out over the sparkling Pacific, with the green and orange tradewind clouds sailing down the horizon. John turned his back to it. He was afraid of the sea—and somehow he had to learn to like it.

The soft booming of the surf on the outer reef made shivers run up his spine. He asked Joe Kaulili how far the nearest neighbor was.

"Maybe half mile. Chang Lee. Fine guy. You like Chang."

"Do people ever come here to fish or swim?"

"Suah! You no like people come?"

"I'd like to be by myself for a while."

The fat Hawaiian grinned at him. "You funny kind guy. If you no want people around, put up *kapu* signs."

John supposed the whole story was in circulation. He had gone to the local doctor for a routine checkup, and he had told the doctor the story. The doctor had probably talked.

"You could cross-brace those stilts," John said.

"Suah!" Joe Kaulili agreed. "Bombye I fix."

Glancing at that jovial brown face, John knew that the stilts would never be cross-braced unless he did it himself. He would do it, of course. His father had been a building contractor, and John had grown up to respect high standards of construction. He had been his father's partner until his father's death; they had not put up a building of which they could not be proud.

The slapdash methods of postwar construction had disgusted father and son. The problems which plagued builders in the early postwar period—lumber so green you could almost wring the sap out of it with your hands, galvanized pipe so thinly plated you could almost wipe the stuff off with a rag—and all the other shoddy, hastily produced materials, the shortages, the substitutes, the buyers who didn't care about quality—these annoyances had given John's father the high blood pressure that

had killed him. And John had sold out the business and joined the peacetime Air Force. . . .

John leased Joe Kaulili's bungalow for a year. He bought some lumber and some tools and cross-braced the underpinning; with this done, though the *lanai* still sagged when he walked on it, the bungalow no longer swayed.

He tried to get used to the surf. The cove was called Kuialelua, or *Thundering Surf at Sunset*, and he was sure it boomed more heavily at sunset than at other times. He watched the waves with fear. He felt that they were reaching for him, that they wanted to destroy him.

One morning he put on shorts and stretched out on a patch of grass beside the beach. It was the first step in his war with the sea. Closing his eyes, he tried to relax and not be afraid.

A shadow fell across his face. He opened his eyes. A girl in a faded blue two-piece swim-suit was standing a few feet away looking down at him with a shy smile. She was slim and golden. She had brown hair bleached almost blonde by the sun, and dark blue eyes.

"Hello," she said. "You're John Peavey, aren't you?"

He sat up and smiled. "I am."

"I'm Nora Haldeen." She seemed shy but determined. "Why don't you like people?"

John flushed. "I do like people. I just want to be alone for a while."

SHE sat down on her heels. "You hate the ocean because your plane was shot down, and you lost the sight of one eye and you floated around on a rubber raft off Korea for days. Isn't that right?"

He didn't want to talk about it. "Yes, that's right."

"Your eye looks perfectly normal. The optic nerve must have been injured. And there were lots of sharks, and there was a big storm. Isn't that what happened?"

"That's exactly what happened."

"It's easy to understand why you hate the sea," Nora Haldeen said; "but what have you got against people?"

Her friendliness made him want to explain himself, but it was a hard thing to explain; it would sound silly.

His mother had died when he was a year old, and he'd been brought up by a father who believed that the first rule of life is self-sufficiency; you didn't take your problems to anybody—you worked them out and licked them unaided. Self-sufficiency had become a habit—a lonely habit.

"I haven't anything against people," he said. "But when I have a problem, I have to work it out alone. I'm just built that way. You're right, Miss Haldeen. The days and nights I spent on the raft—the sharks and the storm—scared me green. And then I couldn't fly any more because of this eye."

"Could you swim?"

"I used to swim a lot."

"But now you're afraid to?"

It embarrassed him to talk about it. "A ten-ton tractor couldn't drag me into that water."

"Wading?"

"Not even wading."

"But you're going to try?"

"Sure. Some day."

"You need friends," she said. "That's what friends are for." She was blushing. He knew she was implying that she would become his friend if he would say the word. And he could not tell her, without sounding rude, that what he wanted was to be let alone.

She looked so innocent! Her eyes had the clearness and the softness of innocence, and her mouth had a sweet, unspoiled look.

"Are you wondering who I am?"

He shrugged.

"You're Nora Haldeen. What else?"

"It's a crazy story," she said. "Sometimes I almost don't believe it myself. I don't know who my mother was. I was born in Chicago. My father was a retired chief petty officer. He brought me out here when I was five. He married a Chinese-Hawaiian woman, and when I was nine, he went away. A lot of white men come out here and do that, you know. They marry native girls and live with them a while, then go away. That's what my father did."

She added spiritedly: "Maybe he had reasons. I don't know what they were. Puna—my stepmother—is wonderful. She's beautiful and kind, and always fair and understanding. I couldn't possibly love my own mother

any more than I love Puna. Well, she waited five years, then married Chang Lee, the assistant superintendent at the sugar mill. He's wonderful too. He's kinder to me than my own father ever was. Well, isn't that a crazy story?"

"No," he said. "I think it's a very nice story."

HE was trying to visualize the kind of life she had led. He wondered what happened to an American girl brought up by Chinese. She had a strange simplicity, and she was a strange mixture of shyness and boldness. He had never known anyone else like her.

"I've just graduated from high-school," Nora said. "Chang would send me to college if I wanted to go. Any college on the mainland. But I don't want to go."

"Why not?"

"If I went, what then? What would I be?"

"What are you planning to do?"

"I don't know," she said. "I haven't any plans." She was blushing and looking down at her hands. He wondered about the men, the boys, she knew; who her friends were. He supposed she was terribly lonely, a white girl among all these racial mixtures, and had gravitated to him because he too was white—and lonely. Their main difference, he decided, was that her loneliness was intolerable, whereas he wanted aloneness.

"Come on!" she said. "Let's go for a swim!" She got up quickly and gracefully and slid a liquid glance at

him. It was an innocent glance, but it was invitational, and it answered his question.

"Thank you, Nora. Not today."

She walked down the white sand beach and into the clear green water. She turned and smiled.

"Stop being silly. Come on."

The clear green water seemed to rise up around her. He felt his heart begin to beat in a panic. It was silly, but the sight of her walking into the water sent shivers crawling up his spine.

"Aren't you coming?" she called.

"No, thank you."

He knew she couldn't understand it. He hadn't meant to be curt, but he had been; he had offended her—and he had spurned her offer of friendship. She thought he was being rude and ridiculous; no man could be so afraid of the water as he was pretending to be. She couldn't believe that his heart was racing with panic. Or that he had to work out his problem alone. She was such a nice, friendly little thing; he hated to hurt her—but he hoped she wouldn't make any further offers of friendship.

For a long time, she didn't.

JOHN was on his *lanai* watching the sunset when he saw the man gliding through the *haole koa* thicket from the beach. He was big and brown and shiny with a mane of thick black curls. He wore no shirt, no shoes, nothing but ragged dungarees. He had a tremendous chest and a great pot belly. Sunset was a blaze of purples and fiery reds, and this light

glittered and rippled on the shiny brown torso.

Then John saw the woman gliding after the man. She was almost as tall as the man, and she wore a pink wrapper. They were laughing. The man began to take measured steps. He was evidently pacing off a line along the edge of the thicket.

The woman shaded her eyes, peering at the bungalow. She came through the papaya grove and started up the bungalow steps and at each step she took, the bungalow shook. She was a huge brown woman with a strangely elfin smile.

"Aloha! Aloha! Aloha!" she cried.

John said weakly, "Hello, there."

The woman came in and shut the screen door and her smile was as artless as a child's. Her thick black hair glistened with water. Her pink wrapper was wet; it stuck to her vast brown body. She had evidently been swimming in it.

"You John Peavey, *ai*?" she cried.

"Yes."

"I'm Emma Akalāma. Dat's my husband David. We gonna be your neighbor." She whirled about. "Ay, David!" she shouted.

John felt his nerves recoiling from the impact of this huge brown woman's heartiness. And what had she said about being his neighbor?

The man was climbing the steps. His smile was elfin too.

"Dis Johnny Peavey, David," the woman said.

DAVID held out his huge brown hand. He must have been fully six feet three and he must have weighed at least two hundred and fifty pounds.

"Hello, Johnny," he roared. "Joe Kaulili tol' me you rent his house. Tol' me you was a buildin' contractor Stateside. Dat's good. Dat's fine. We gonna build a house—clear out dat *haole koa* and build a house. Mebby you tell us something, *ai*?"

"Right down there?" John asked.

"Shuah! You bet! Down there. Just bought the land from Joe. Sunday gonna start buildin', maybe."

"Too good, yeh?" Mrs. Akalāma cried. "We gonna be neighbor!"

John tried not to show his indignation at the prospect of sharing his isolation with these boisterous Hawaiians. There was a half-finished highball on the table beside which he had been sitting. David glanced at it, then back at him, and grinned.

"We celebrate, hey, John? We have a drink on it, yeh?"

"Sure," John said. "You bet."

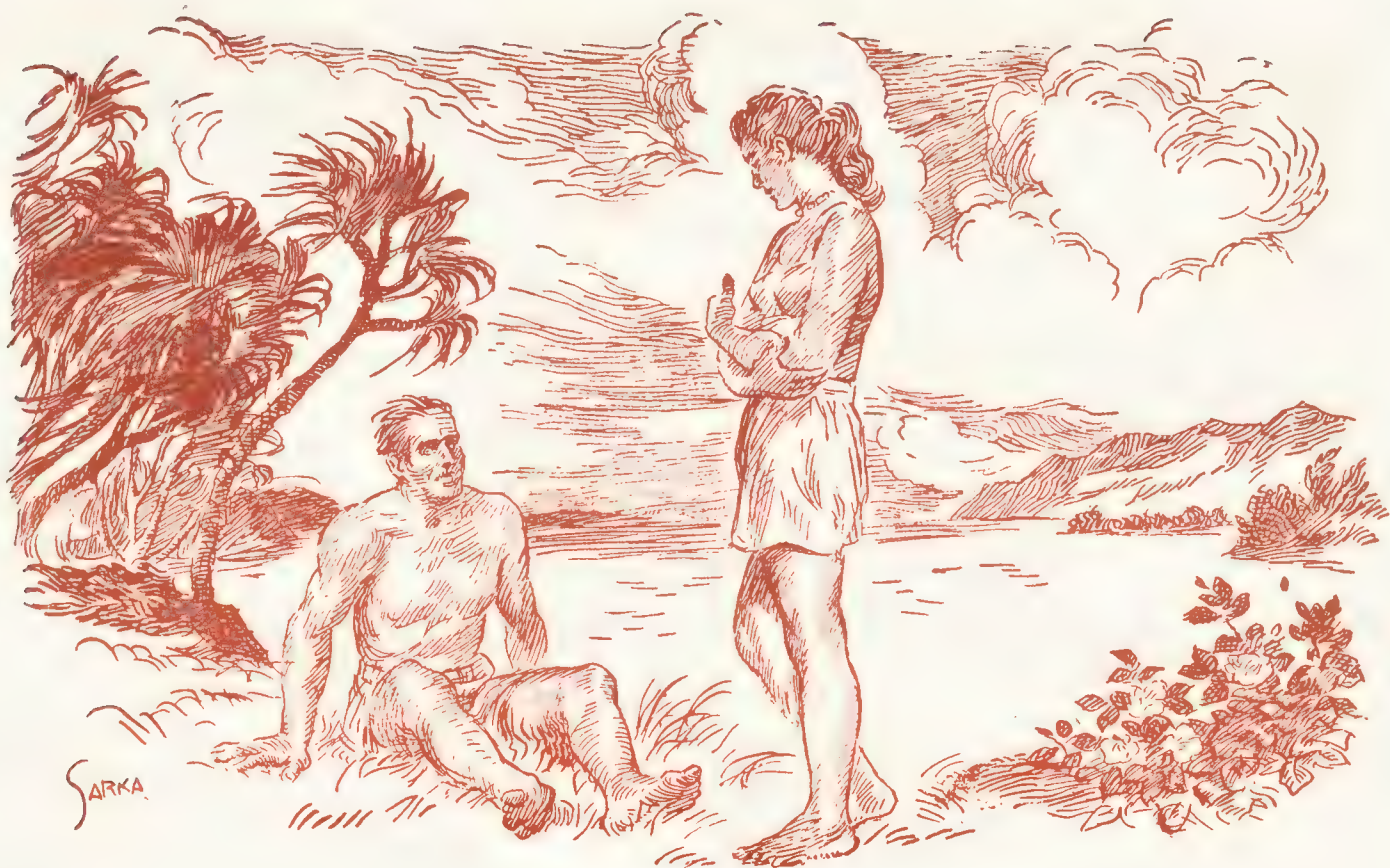
Emma squealed, "You okay, Johnny," and threw her fat brown arms around him and hugged him.

The angrily embarrassed young man stalked into the kitchen, brought whisky, soda and glasses and made

Illustrated by
CHARLES SARKA



Work began and John tried to boss it but he soon learned that few of his suggestions were being followed.



John flushed. "I do like people. I just want to be alone for a while."

them each a drink. Trying to be polite, he asked David what kind of house he was planning to build.

"Ah! We want beeg room for dance and sleep, beeg kitchen for eat, beeg *lanai* for sit down and watch for fish."

"You beeg buildin' contractor State-side," Emma said. "You boss job, yeh?"

"Shuah," said her husband. "Johnny boss the whole job."

John started to protest, but it was useless.

Emma finished her highball and made herself another. Grinning at John, she said: "How you like Nora, Johnny?"

John felt his face redden. "Nora Haldeen?" He shrugged. "I've hardly met her."

Emma rolled her eyes. "I t'eenk she like you, boy. Why you no make good with her?" She made chirping sounds. "She too pretty for you, eh—is that it?"

John tried to get into the mood; tried to laugh, to smile. He couldn't. He was stiff and resentful. He didn't understand these people; they had the clumsiness of playful savages.

David said they would start work Sunday. They would come early to clear out the *haole koa*. *Haole koa*, John had learned, started as an inno-

cent fernlike sprout, then became a shrub which was fine feed for cattle but bad for horses because it made the hair of their manes and tails fall out. If you didn't turn cattle into it, the shrubs grew swiftly into trees fifteen or twenty feet high. It was hard stuff to grub out. David said he would bring enough friends to clear a space down to the beach in one day.

When the bottle was empty, the Akalamas left. John had a headache. He hated the Akalamas for their bouncing boisterousness, for what they were going to do to his privacy. In the morning, he ordered more lumber. He worked with fury, shoring up the floor of the bungalow until he could jump on it anywhere without feeling it give.

THE sun was hardly up on Sunday when he was awakened by bursts of mellow laughter and shouts. A dozen or more cars were parked along the edge of the *haole koa*. Tools were leaning against the trees—axes, hatchets, rakes, hoes, wicked-looking cane knives, and Japanese sickles with long wooden handles and crescent blades.

He had breakfast and looked again. There were more cars. The tools were still leaning against the trees. Men were scrambling over the black lava boulders at the beach. Women

sat in a circle about a small fire over which was a sheet of galvanized iron. They were broiling fish. Other women sat about a dishpan in which was a dark purple mass. They were picking out what appeared to be bits of shell, and salvaging small pieces of what appeared to be cooked liver. Another group, mostly men, sat on the ground, drinking beer, talking, laughing. Young children ran about shrieking. Girls were making plumiera leis. When one was finished, it was looped about the neck of an older person, always to the accompaniment of a kiss—and laughter.

That was what struck John hardest—their laughter. They laughed easily, uproariously, at anything, as if there was a hair trigger on their laughter mechanism, and the least pull would explode it.

A woman as fat and brown as a porpoise was cavorting in the clear blue water off the point, and John was sure she was Emma Akalama. Every time she wriggled or twitched, there was a roar of laughter.

John's irritability grew. He resented the noise they were making, and his rule had always been, like his father's, if there's a job to be done, get on it.

David came bouncing up the bungalow steps. "Ay, Johnny," he yelled.

"Come! You go eat with us! We go see my friends!"

John did not want to meet his friends, but he supposed he might as well get it over with. He went down with David.

"Everybody!" David roared. "Dis Johnny, my pal! Johnny big buildin' contractor Stateside. Johnny gonna boss the job. Yeh, dis Johnny, he one good guy."

He pointed at them and named them one by one—Hawaiians, Chinese-Hawaiians, Japanese-Hawaiians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans. One was a slim, brown-haired girl in blue slacks and halter. She smiled at John. It took him a moment to recognize her. He tried to smile at Nora Haldeen, but couldn't. Remembering his rudeness, he felt his face grow hot. But Nora did not seem resentful. She was one of this crowd. She belonged to it, yet she seemed apart from it. He hoped that no one with playful clumsiness would try to bring them together, and no one did.

Someone put a can of beer in John's hand. A small girl looped a lei about his neck and shyly kissed his cheek with a giggled "Aloha, John-ee." Someone brought him a tin plate of fish, seaweed and some pieces of the brown stuff that had looked like cooked liver. It was *wana*, or sea urchin. He managed to eat most of it. They made fun of his efforts; he tried to laugh with them, to smile, but his face felt paralyzed.

David and Emma approached with wide grins. Each grasped one of his hands.

"We go for swim, Johnny," David said.

Panic went through him. He tried to free his hands, but they held tight. When he struggled, they let him go.

David said: "What's a matter, Johnny? You no swim?"

"I don't want to swim!" he panted.

"You scared of swim?" Emma asked.

"You 'fraid of water?"

"Put it that way."

His anger puzzled them but only for a moment. Then David began to chuckle and Emma said: "We get you swim some day, Johnny. Nothin' to be scared of."

They knew he was afraid of the sea, and why, and he supposed they were only trying to be friendly and helpful; but he was furious at their clumsiness. He escaped to his bungalow and their laughter came rolling after him. It reminded him of the waves of the sea, those stupid, meaningless waves whose only purpose was to destroy. . . .

When the party broke up, not an axe or a hatchet had been laid to a *haole koa* tree. . . .

"Ay, John-ee! You home?" It was a girl's voice, shrill with urgency.

John turned on the light and looked at his watch. It was 2:16 A.M. He hastily got into his dressing-gown. He reached the *lanai* as they swarmed up the steps.

There were eight of them, three men and five girls, one of whom was Nora Haldeen. They had been at Moki Kimokane's house and had decided that something should be done about John's lonesomeness. Johnny was too-good joe. Johnny was one fine guy, and they could not bear it, thinking of him all alone, needing his friends.

They had brought beer, food, ukuleles and harmonicas. They sang, talked, danced, drank and ate until sunrise. For reasons beyond his understanding, these new friends of his seemed to love him. They had great *aloha* for him.

By now, John Peavey was learning that *aloha* meant not only *love* but *good-by, hello, welcome, pity, mercy, gratitude* and *kindness*. He tried to be grateful for their well-meant kindness, but he resented it. They were sorry for him. They pitied him because of his fears. He wished they would leave him alone, but hardly a day went by without someone coming up his steps calling, "Aloha, John-ee! Come along go fish." Or, with great grins: "Come along go swim." His refusals did not discourage them.

One day, when no one was around, he put on swimming trunks and waded out into the warm, clear water. He was almost waist-deep when panic overtook him and sent him back to the beach, trembling as if he were chilled to the bone. He was certain that he would never have the courage to swim again. . . .

On the second Sunday, the Akalamas and their friends arrived early with their axes, hatchets, hoes, rakes, cane knives and sickles, but they had hardly gathered when word came that the *manini* were running. They spent the day throwing their nets for *manini*, drinking beer, eating, singing, dancing and talking.

On the third Sunday, it began to rain at about nine and the entire party, some thirty strong, adjourned to John's bungalow. The day and most of the night was spent drinking beer, eating, singing, dancing and talking.

John was awakened on the following Sunday by the incredible sounds of axes and hatchets biting into wood. They were at work at last! Men and women were chopping down the *haole koa*. Children dragged away the trees as fast as they fell.

They worked a while, then stopped for beer. They worked again, then stopped for a big picnic lunch. After lunch, they worked again, but one by one they put aside their tools and

gathered in a group to talk, laugh, sing and drink beer. . . .

Weeks later, the *haole koa* thicket was cleared. Odd lots of lumber began to arrive. David told John the cottage would be built with no delay. John asked to see the plans. There were no plans. Dimensions, the placing of doors and windows, the plumbing and the wiring would be decided as they went along.

John wanted to have no part in it, but David kept pleading and insisting. It was the exacting conscience of a craftsman that finally forced John to agree to boss the job.

Work began and he tried to boss it but he soon learned that few of his suggestions were being followed. When he appeared, every one would knock off, drink beer and listen to him with respect. When he left, they went back to work and ignored everything he said.

After a few Sundays of this, John stopped giving advice, but he inspected the job after they had left. He saw door-frames askew, or too high or wide for the doors they were meant to fit. He saw undersized floor joists and studs on unmatched centers. Where studs should have been doubled up, in corners and at doors and windows, there were single studs. Small nails were used where large nails were needed, and large nails where small nails were called for. There were no crossies to prevent rafters from pushing the walls out, and there was no bracing between studs.

The finished work offended him even more—with hammer-marks everywhere, wide cracks at joints, unmortised hinges, doors with a chewed look where the locks were, doors swinging the wrong way and interfering with other doors, windows installed putty-side in.

DAVID made a speech at the housewarming. He gave all credit to Johnny: "Dis Johnny was o endamn fine contractor." Hhe guests cheered loudly.

When the wiring was tested, some switches blew fuses, others turned on lights in unexpected places. The plumbing leaked. The outside faucet gave hot water. Someone had forgotten to install drain vents; the kitchen sink drained at a trickle, and when the toilet was flushed the bathtub drain blew bubbles.

When David and Emma did their comic hula, the floor of the big *lanai* gave like a loose drumhead, and the walls weaved.

Nora Haldeen, in a white party dress, stood close to John with smiling pride. Since the morning when she had introduced herself with that curious blend of shyness and determination, she had given John many subtle



"Look!" Emma whooped. "My yacht!" They saw in the backwash the wreck of their cottage.

little signs of encouragement, to none of which he had responded. Tonight, she acted as if she had reached a decision—that he was hers. It annoyed him. The whooping crowd annoyed him.

John went home early. He lay awake for hours, listening to the laughter, thinking of Nora Haldeen's proud possessiveness, and of his private little hell which was no longer private.

ON the fourth morning following the Akalamas' house warming, John awoke early. From his bed, he could see down the narrow road which led to the village. A jeep came around the bend and stopped suddenly. Its driver leaped out, ran to a palm tree and climbed it as if he were being pursued. Puzzled, John watched him. The man locked his legs about the tree and stared at the sea.

Shouts of laughter came from the cove. John went out to the lanai. The cove was drained. Black rocks and coral heads which had always been submerged now stood on wet white sand. Nora Haldeen in a bathing suit, Emma Akalama in a yellow

muumu and David in dungarees were running about, gathering up live fish.

Beyond them, John saw the reef as he had never seen it before. In the past, he had seen only the top of it as waves broke and foamed over it. Now he saw it from top to bottom and from end to end—a black-fanged rock ledge fully twelve feet high, from which water was draining in white cataracts. A few hundred yards beyond the reef, a toppling mass of green water was rushing toward the cove.

John tried to shout, but his throat was paralyzed. Nora, Emma and David had seen the piled-up mass of water rolling toward them. Still laughing, they ran swiftly toward the beach.

The reef vanished under ten feet of green water. The cove swiftly filled and water continued to push in from the sea. Nora, Emma and David were floundering now in water waist-deep. They reached the Akalamas' cottage.

John's heart was racing and he was suddenly short of breath. He was so weak he would have fallen to his knees if he hadn't been holding to the lanai railing. All the horror the sea represented to him was being ex-

pressed in this senseless unleashing of its awful power. Somewhere, thousands of miles away, this wave had originated, to bring ruthless destruction here. There would be others, larger; there would be a series, each one larger until the big one came, the killer.

He watched this first one come charging in, past the Akalamas' cottage, past his bungalow, rushing up the valley, beating down sugar cane. The mass of water paused for a moment, then started sliding back, and in sliding back it did its greatest damage.

He felt the current sucking away at the slabs of stone on which the up-rights rested, eating away at the ground. The steps, wrenched free, floated out to sea with a mass of large and small debris. Flowers, bushes and trees were uprooted and swept out of his garden.

JOHN went over in his mind every brace he had built into the bungalow's understructure. He remembered the heavy nails, the galvanized bolts, the heavy lumber—the two by eights, the four by sixes. The bun-

galow was vibrating at the pull of the river flowing back into the cove, but not from weakness. It might sink a little, tilt a little, but he was sure it would not go to pieces.

The returning wave had moved the Akalama cottage at least fifty feet toward the cove. It was leaning at a sharp angle. Water was gushing out of broken windows and doorways, carrying furniture with it.

Another wave was coming in. It was higher than the first. It seemed to slide, as if the mass of water were being pushed, or squeezed, off the top of the sea. It approached with a grinding sound. He saw coral heads like gigantic skulls from six to ten feet in diameter rolling in the mighty wash of it.

THERE was a hollow booming as it struck the Akalama cottage. Afloat, the cottage was carried against a banyan tree. The cottage seemed to explode. The roof flew off and floated away. Doors and sections of siding and floor held together by studs and joists were carried up the valley.

John saw Emma and David in the wreckage. They were clinging to planks. He watched in the churn of planks and doors, siding and flooring for Nora to appear. He ran to the end of the *lanai*. He heard a scream. One of Emma's fat brown arms was wildly waving. David caught one of the lower branches of a kamani tree. He reached down and gripped Emma's flailing arm.

Then John caught a glimpse of Nora. She was under a tangle of planks which rolled like an enormous ball loosely held together. She disappeared. Then she re-appeared. She seemed limp. She must be unconscious or dead, for her legs, her arms were not moving except as the wild motion of the water moved them. Her brown hair floated about her face as she disappeared again.

John pulled at the *lanai* door. The bungalow was tilting, settling at one end and its twisting had jammed the door. He jerked and yanked but the door would not give. He kicked out the lower section of screen. He jumped into the water. He was swept past the end of the bungalow. The branch of a submerged bush gashed his forehead. He started to swim. He saw Nora's body tumbling over and over. He put his head down and swam toward her with all the strength he had. When he lifted his head, he heard David yelling. He lost sight of Nora. He swam in the direction where he had last seen her. When he saw her again, she was not more than a dozen feet away, trying now to cling to a narrow section of flooring.

He reached her. He got under her and lifted and pushed until she was

on the section of flooring. Then broken planks were coming at him from all directions. They were in a whirling eddy that moved slowly in the rush of water toward the kamani tree. David was reaching down and yelling encouragement. He seized Nora's hands and pulled her into the tree. When John climbed up, she was sitting on a thick branch and leaning against the trunk, trying to get her breath.

He sat, trembling with exhaustion, on the thick limb beside her and watched the wave surge up the valley to beat down the ripe, bronze-tasseled cane. He saw his bungalow coming apart. Chunks of it were dropping away. It made a slow, deep bow toward the cove and half of the roof fell off.

David was laughing in deep shouts and Emma was laughing. John wondered what they could find to laugh about. Their cottage was destroyed. He knew they had no money. It would be years before they could build again. Yet they laughed as if the catastrophe were a hilarious joke.

"So, Johnny, you no like go for swim, *ai*?" Emma yelled. "You shuah went for swim dis time, boy!"

Her laughter tugged at the bottom of John's lungs. His chest muscles were twitching and jerking. He felt himself, his insides, shaking and convulsing.

"Loo-o-ok!" Emma whooped. "My yacht!"

He saw it charging down the valley in the backwash, convoyed by the wreckage of the Akalama cottage and other debris—Emma's bathtub, miraculously afloat. It went careening into the cove.

JOHN began to laugh. Nora was laughing. David roared and Emma shrieked with laughter.

The bungalow was going. It suddenly collapsed into the roaring backwash and the wreckage was swept out to sea.

Something hard and ungiving inside John seemed to be breaking up and coming out of him in laughter. His stomach and his sides ached with laughter, but he did not stop. He did not want to stop. He put his arm around Nora's waist so they wouldn't fall off the branch.

He believed he was beginning to understand these people and the other people like them, and why they laughed so easily. They simply refused to see the gloomy side of things. Considering all the grimness, the unrelieved tensions in the world, what was wrong with the idea of laughing at everything?

John Peavey was beginning to have great *aloha* for these people of his.

—THE END

Now

ONE day in the spring of 1865 Father Armand David, a French priest on a missionary assignment in China, climbed to the top of the ancient wall enclosing the imperial hunting park on the outskirts of Peking. What he saw from this perch began one of the strangest of all stories of man's interference in the affairs of nature.

At some distance from the wall, well within the park, Father David saw a herd of over a hundred queer-looking deer. Their tails were as long as the tail of a donkey and ended in a donkeylike brush. They carried their heads low, almost in the manner of a cow. They had both neck and throat manes, and large spreading hoofs somewhat like those of a reindeer. Father David, an enthusiastic naturalist as well as a zealous missionary, knew at once that here was a deer that he had never seen before and, he felt pretty sure, no other naturalist had ever seen.

He determined to have a closer look at those deer. But this was no easy matter, for the imperial park was strictly forbidden ground, especially to foreigners, and there were plenty of heavily armed Tartar soldiers on guard. This park, considerably larger than the city itself, had been the hunting preserve of the Chinese emperors for many centuries. It had been enclosed by a wall for nearly five hundred years, and nobody but the emperor or his guests was allowed to enter it. The killing of any of the numerous animals was forbidden under penalty of death. Though the Tartar guards probably risked this drastic punishment at times when griping about their rations became acute, their fear was strong enough to deter them from giving Father David any information which might furnish evidence against them.

So, curbing his impatience, the priest began slowly to worm himself into the confidence of the guards. He learned that the mulelike deer was called *mi-lu* or more often, *ssu-pu-hsiang*, which means "the four characters that do not fit together." The Chinese said: "He belongs to the stag by his antlers, to the cow by his feet, the camel by his neck and the mule by his tail." The *milu*, they told him, lived in large numbers in Tibet. This, however, was not true. It has never

We Help Them Survive

since been found in Tibet or in any other place. All the evidence gathered since Father David's time proves that the herd in Peking was the last surviving remnant of a race that, as a wild animal, had long ago disappeared from the face of the earth. They had lived here in the park for centuries protected by their wall, while all their wild brothers had perished, nobody knows why or how.

A few fossil remains is the only evidence of their existence that has ever been found anywhere else. The story of their living in Tibet was the result of a confusion of names, as was proved many years later when Manchurian hunters collected eleven deer, which they called milu, for shipment to England. They turned out to be reindeer. It was then realized that the natural assumption that this deer lived and flourished somewhere in the wild was false; the fact that they were extinct except for these few in Peking had never occurred to anybody.

After much patience in cultivating the park guards, Father David at length succeeded "with money and trouble," as his diary tells us, in getting hold of two skins and some shed antlers. With this evidence in hand, he was sure that he had discovered a new species. When he first saw the herd from the top of the wall they had shed their antlers. Now that he had antlers, he saw that they were very strange ones, quite different from those of any other deer. They looked as if they had been fastened on backward. When his specimens reached Paris in April, 1866, the Academy of Sciences found that his judgment was correct: here was not only a new species, but one so widely different from all others that it was classified as a new family. The French scientists gave it the technical name of *Elaphurus Davidianus* in honor of its discoverer, and ever since it has been commonly known as Père David's deer.

FATHER DAVID'S discovery was of course treated as big news in the learned if somewhat stuffy pages of scientific journals, and every zoo director was fired with a desire to exhibit the new deer. Various European governments were soon prodded into showing a lively interest in natural history, and their ambassadors in Peking were ordered to request the

OF RECENT YEARS MEN HAVE DONE A LOT OF BABY-SITTING FOR MOTHER NATURE IN THE ENDEAVOR TO PRESERVE RARE SPECIES OF ANIMALS THAT WE USED TO REGARD ONLY AS PREY.

Written and Illustrated by
CARL BURGER



Milu—this rarest of all deer seems to have gained a firm foothold far from its native land.



The wisent is a close cousin of our American bison.

Chinese authorities to supply specimens for exhibition. Though the imperial minister couldn't quite fathom the reason for all this pother, he was interested in promoting international good feeling, and caused a pair of milu to be sent to Paris. They unfortunately died on the way, but a pair sent shortly afterward to London fell safely into the arms of the Royal Zoological Society. They prospered in only a very mild way in their new home, and at the turn of the century only a scanty number of their descendants were living.

Meanwhile dire disaster struck the original herd in Peking. A great flood in 1895 caused widespread famine in the vicinity of the city. The flood also undermined the ancient wall of the imperial hunting park, and many of the deer escaped, to be eaten by the hungry people. To complete the destruction came the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Allied troops occupied Peking, and a regiment of soldiers quartered in the park so fancied the substitution of venison for bully beef in their mess that they killed all the milu except one doe. This lone doe, unsolaced by male companionship, led a miserable existence until 1920, when she died. That was the last of Père David's deer in the homeland. There remained only the few lonely exiles in the London zoo.

These exiles weren't very happy coped up in their small enclosures. They pined for wide open spaces in which to graze and roam, and the narrow confines of zoological parks were a far cry from the luxury of the imperial hunting park. The urge to breed seemed to die out, and they dwindled to a few head.

Now a good fairy enters the picture in the person of a noble Britisher, the Duke of Bedford, who maintained a large deer park on his estate at Wo-

burn Abbey. He purchased the remaining milu, eighteen in all, and turned them loose to follow their own devices in a great four-thousand-acre enclosure. Here they could graze to their hearts' content and wallow in the wet marshes. Three of the original eighteen proved sterile, but the others accepted their tremendous social responsibility with gusto, and the herd rapidly increased. In the summer of 1914 there were eighty-eight animals.

During the first World War sheep and cattle were put to graze in the park by the British food authorities, and half the herd died from lack of sufficient food. They have done well since then, however, and have increased to about 250 head. Their rutting season comes in July and August, and the spotted fawns are born in the spring. Because of the abundant fare provided by their ducal warden, the stags used to shed their antlers twice a year. Having now grown more accustomed to rich provender, they shed only in the fall. The does, like all other deer except reindeer and caribou, grow no antlers. The milu have no social contact whatever with the many other deer at Woburn Abbey.

MINDFUL of the race's close call at the time of the Boxer rebellion, when all the eggs were, so to speak, in one basket, the Duke of Bedford has generously and wisely given specimens to several zoos. In 1947 he sent four fawns to New York's Bronx Park Zoo. Here they have plenty of grazing space and have grown to healthy maturity. There are two males and two females. The two stags have very different characters, one being gentle and friendly, the other wild and skittish. The does will have no traffic with the gentle one, but he of the roving eye has fathered two fawns, both by the same doe, one

born in 1950, the other in 1951. So this rarest of all deer, on the verge of extinction in 1900, seems now to have gained a new and firm foothold far from its native land.

ON February 19, 1921, a poacher called by the unpronounceable name of Bartolomeus Szpakowitz shot a wisent in the Forest of Bialowiecza in Poland. It was the last wild wisent left alive in the world.

The story of the wisent, or European bison, runs strangely parallel with that of Père David's deer. The wisent is a close cousin of our American bison, and the two look much alike. There are remarkably lifelike representations of this animal painted by prehistoric artists on the walls of caves in southern France. Unlike our bison, which was most at home on the treeless prairie, he was a forest-living beast. When Europe was a barbarous thinly populated continent, the wisent roamed pretty much all over it. Julius Caesar in his Commentaries on the Gallic War tells of seeing it in the Hercynian Forest, a vast wooded area along the upper Danube. A remnant of this great wood, the Forest of Bialowiecza, was destined to become the last home of the wisent.

As the European forests were leveled and the land was cultivated by the growing population, the wisent fell upon evil times. He was hunted mercilessly by the Gauls and shipped to Rome by the invaders to be pitted against gladiators in the arena. Konrad Gessner, who wrote a famous natural history in 1555, says: "The wisent is found only in East Prussia, Poland and Hungary." By the time of King Frederick the Great, there existed in Prussia only one small herd near Tilsit. Frederick took measures to protect them, but they perished during the severe winter of 1742. Not long after this the only wisents left were the few in the Forest of Bialowiecza. Russia annexed the Province of Grodno in 1795, and the czar declared the ancient forest a sanctuary, as it had been for centuries under the Polish kings.

In 1810 there were about 350 of the animals living. Their numbers varied considerably through the succeeding years, climbing to 1575 in 1860 and dropping to six hundred in 1910. This falling off occasioned much anxiety among Russian savants. The wisents were fed special fodder and otherwise pampered, and it was suggested that they were being babied too much. Left to fend for themselves, they got along better and stabilized their number at about 750. A second and fairly large herd now surprisingly came to light in the Caucasus Mountains. There were in addition a few small bunches, numbering around 120 in

all, on the estates of various noblemen.

Then World War I brought disaster to the wisent, as had the Boxer Rebellion to Père David's deer. The Forest of Bialowiecza was near the Russo-German border, and battles raged around and through it. As usual the innocent bystanders suffered. Many wisents were killed, and the herd was broken up into a few wandering bands. Field Marshal von Hindenburg at length came to the rescue, issued strict orders to protect the animals and assigned a high ranking officer with a corps of assistants to see that the orders were obeyed. But much damage had already been done. When the German troops withdrew in November, 1918, only 185 animals were left, and the local peasants immediately began to shoot these. Finally there remained only one lone wisent—and along came Bartolomeus Szpakowicz and shot him.

Meanwhile the Caucasus wisents had also become war casualties, to the last head. A small herd near St. Petersburg was shot by the soldiers detailed to guard it. In one way or another every wisent in Russia was wiped out. There remained only the herd numbering fifty-five which the Prince of Pless had bred on his Polish estate from a bull and three cows given to him in 1869 by Czar Alexander II. Immediately after the war a revolt against the newly established Polish government included this herd in its offensive, and left only three animals, each one of them with several machine-gun bullets in his body.

Then the International Society for the Preservation of the Wisent was formed. Since there were no longer any wild wisents, its first job was to count the few half-tame ones that



The record—sixty-nine buffalo for an eight-hour day.

were scattered about on private estates. The count totaled fifty-six living animals. With this discouragingly small stock, the Society set to work and made several attempts to found herds. All were failures except the one at Bialowiecza, where three animals, a bull and two cows purchased in 1929, were released on the old stamping ground where the race had so long clung to life. They multiplied till they were a tidy herd at the beginning of World War II; but many of them were bombed or wantonly shot by soldiers in the troubled years that followed.

But they still hang on! The latest stud book of the Society lists all pure-blooded living wisents up to January 1, 1947. The number shown is 103—forty-eight bulls and fifty-five cows. Most of these are at Bialowiecza.

Twenty are owned by the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey, where they graze in the same park with his other remnant of a nearly vanished race, the Père David's deer.

THE tragic history of the American buffalo or bison belongs in the same volume with that of the milu and wisent. Doubtless most Americans know this story in sketchy outline, but it is dramatic enough to deserve a somewhat detailed telling. Many writers have attempted to estimate the number of buffalo that roamed the prairies before the building of the first transcontinental railways. Far more graphic than mere figures are some incidents related by Martin S. Garretson in his book "The American Bison."

In 1859 Luke Voorhees, Territorial Treasurer of Oklahoma, rode from the South Platte to Pawnee Buttes, a distance of a little more than two hundred miles, through one continuous herd. On all sides of him as far as his eye could see across the flat prairie there was nothing but buffalo—a solid brown carpet of buffalo.

The captain of a steamboat plying the upper Missouri in 1867 tells of encountering a herd crossing the river. For a distance of more than four miles the steamer plowed through a living mass of animals. They so choked the water that the boat took four hours to pass through them.

The first train of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad that ran to Dodge City, Kansas, was held up by a great herd. While the train waited, a compact mass of buffalo crossed a three-mile stretch of track for two hours, going at an estimated speed of five miles per hour—thirty square miles of solid buffalo.



The wisent was shipped to Rome to be pitted against the gladiators.

The great slaughter began with the building of the railroads, and increased steadily as the market for buffalo robes and salted tongues widened. Thousands of men engaged in the carnage as a business, taking only the hides and tongues of their victims. Parties from the East, miscalling themselves sportsmen, went forth on horseback with repeating rifles and vied with one another as to how many animals they could kill in a day, leaving the carcasses to rot where they fell. The record in this unsportsmanlike game was held by the redoubtable Buffalo Bill Cody, with a score of sixty-nine buffalo for an eight-hour day. Passengers on trains crossing the plains shot the poor beasts from the car windows just for the fun of seeing them fall.

The only resentment to this indiscriminate slaughter was shown by the Indians. To the plains Indians, the buffalo meant food, clothing and shelter. They saw themselves being robbed of their means of livelihood, and went to war over it. But the U. S. Army drove them back, and the killing went on.

By the year 1894 the hunting wasn't so good. The buffalo had about disappeared. There was a small herd in Athabaska in northern Canada, and some twenty head led a precarious existence, with almost no protection from poachers, in Yellowstone Park. With the exception of a few animals captured as calves and reared in ranch

corrals, they had completely vanished everywhere else.

Then Congress passed the first protective law, providing a heavy fine and imprisonment for the killing of buffalo in Yellowstone Park. Due to the efforts of Col. Charles J. (Buffalo) Jones, the park herd was gradually enlarged by the purchase of a few buffalo here and there from ranchers, and this herd was used to stock the game preserves that began to be established elsewhere by the Government. The first one to be set up comprised 61,500 acres of the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation in Oklahoma. William T. Hornaday, Director of the New York Zoological Park, was one of the prime movers in this good work. Through his efforts fifteen animals were shipped from the Bronx Zoo herd to the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve, where eight thousand acres had been fenced in for their protection. A large herd has grown from this shipment.

In 1905 a small group of interested men founded the American Bison Society. This devoted organization has ever since been the chief instrument in bringing the buffalo back from the jaws of extinction to a position where the race now seems to be sure of survival. At the time of the Society's founding a careful census showed a total of 969 animals in the United States. The 1950 report of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows twenty-eight hundred. . . .



Whooping cranes are the shyest residents of the State of Texas.

In the New York State Museum at Albany stands an exhibit case which bears a label that used to read: "*Five birds you will never see again.*" Shown in the case were the great auk, passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, Labrador duck and trumpeter swan. They recently changed the label to read four instead of five—and took out the trumpeter swan. For this magnificent bird, the largest of all American wildfowl, not only has been seen again, but seen in fairly large numbers, considering the fact that a well-known authority could write as recently as 1912: "The trumpeting that were once heard over the breadth of a great continent will soon be heard no more."

There are two kinds of wild swan in America, the trumpeter and the whistler. Their names aptly describe the difference in their voices. The trumpeter's deep, resonant honk, reminding one of the notes of a French horn, can never be mistaken for the shriller call of the whistler. The voices of the two birds are about the only way you can distinguish them from a distance, for they are both pure white and about the same size. The average length of the trumpeter is sixty-five inches, that of the whistler fifty-five inches. Trumpeters have a wing spread of eight to ten feet, weigh thirty to thirty-five pounds and live as long as seventy years. They mate for life at an age of two or three years. When migrating they often fly so high you cannot see them at all, but you can still hear their voices trumpeting from the blue. This hornlike honk used to ring out over all the central and northern part of North America as far east as Lake Erie. Though probably never as numerous a bird as his smaller cousin, the trumpeter was nevertheless a hardy and fairly numerous race. He has gradually been driven back to make his last stand in the wilds of northwestern Canada.

HUNTERS had no great part in this. The trumpeter swan is an extremely wary bird, and has always lived in country that is even now very sparsely settled. The trouble came chiefly from natural enemies. Eagles and ravens destroyed the eggs, and coyotes, which are death to adults as well as to nestlings, extended their operations to the Canadian nesting grounds. Indians and white settlers are partly to blame, however, for this swan is easily shot at moulting time, when he sheds his primary wing feathers and cannot fly. At all times he must make a tremendous effort to get into the air, for he requires a long stretch of running and wing-flapping to take off from either land or water. This slow take-off, reminding one of an overloaded

airplane, makes it comparatively easy to approach near enough for a shot. Then the Hudson's Bay Company developed a flourishing trade in swan's-down, and this encouraged the swan hunters.

From all these causes the flocks rapidly decreased, until in 1935 there remained only seventy-three trumpeters in the United States, and a slightly larger flock in northern Alberta.

At this point a few interested people under the leadership of the National Audubon Society took a hand. The swans were so few that every pair counted. A sanctuary was established at Red Rock Lake, Montana, the home of the American flock, where game wardens mother the birds with all the fussiness of a hen with one chicken. The Canadian government passed strict laws to protect the northern flock in the Grand Prairie region of Alberta, and assigned to the Royal Mounties the job of enforcement. Watches are kept on individual nests, and it is worth the life of a "varmint" to venture near. This watch is kept up even after the young cygnets leave the nest, and the annual spring crop is carefully counted and anxiously compared with that of the previous year. Records are kept with all the care and exactness of a stud-book in a racing stable.

THE Audubon Society's census of three years ago showed a total of about fifteen hundred birds. Most of them breed in Alberta and migrate westward to the milder climate of southern Alaska and British Columbia. The rest of them live at the Red Rock Refuge. These do not migrate, but live here the year round. No shooting of any wildfowl is allowed at Red Rock; and here, as at Grand Prairie, wardens mount guard over the nests, drive away marauders and keep a record-book.

The 1950 census at Red Rock shows 376 swans as compared to 451 in 1949. This drop of seventy-five caused serious concern to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which went to the length of trying to determine the manner of death of each missing bird. Only sixteen deaths could be definitely accounted for. The Wildlife Service hazards a guess that at least some of those who are AWOL have emigrated to Alaska and Canada. Swans are extremely choosy in their selection of home sites, and since each pair vigorously maintains territorial rights in the vicinity of the nest, the population at Red Rock is nearing the saturation point. Though they mate earlier, trumpeters do not breed till they are five or six years old. There is nothing left to the young folks but to become homesteaders in a new country.



The largest of all American wildfowl—the magnificent trumpeter swan.

Three years ago the Canadian flock numbered around one thousand. There has since been considerable increase, but when a species reaches so low a level, it has a difficult time getting a toehold for a comeback. While the Alberta swans may no longer be hunted, other wildfowl are legal game within their range. Spent shot fired at ducks and geese sinks in the marshes, and the lead pellets are sometimes swallowed by the bottom-feeding swans, who then develop lead poisoning and die. Agitation is afoot to have the Provincial government prohibit all wildfowl shooting in the vicinity of Grand Prairie.

So in spite of ups and downs there seems to be a good chance that the trumpeter will survive. Good luck to him!

LAST spring the hatching of a single egg in a Texas marsh was a front-page story in many newspapers. The producers of this egg were Crip and Josephine, a pair of whooping cranes. By reason of youthful wing injuries neither of them can fly, and they are spending their lives at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in luxurious protective detention.

This was Josephine's second go at maternity. With the help of Pete, her late first husband, she had produced two eggs in the spring of 1949, but succeeded in hatching neither of

them. The disappointment was too much for old Pete, and he died soon afterward. Then Crip, a younger swain, was introduced to Josephine, and proceeded at once to woo her by going into the elaborate dance routine which is customary in all crane nuptials. Crip's advances were received with unrestrained ardor by Josephine, who joined him forthwith in intricate and graceful dance steps, leapings and posturings. In due course of time their cooperation produced a single egg which Josephine proceeded to incubate. During this process she was guarded day and night by game wardens in a specially built tower from which they could watch the nest through field glasses and drive away any chance intruders. At the end of a month the egg hatched, and that was again big news. But Rusty, the baby crane, lived only four days. His untimely demise produced another flood of news stories and even editorial comment.

All this elaborate baby-sitting was occasioned by the fact that Crip and Josephine were two of a total of thirty-seven whooping cranes then alive in the world. The crane population has since risen to forty—thirty-three adults and five young ones, plus the two captives at Aransas. The free birds nest somewhere in the far North—nobody knows just where—and migrate thousands of miles in the fall to Texas,



The hardy Gauls ate the aurochs meat and made the hides into clothing, shoes and war shields. The great

where they spend their winters in the marshes of the Aransas Refuge near Austwell. Here they are watched and cared for by Robert Allen, an ornithologist who was detailed by the National Audubon Society for that special purpose. Mr. Allen spends part of his time hidden inside an artificial cow, from which he can observe the birds without disturbing their jittery nerves.

A scheme has been proposed for following the cranes in an airplane on their spring migration with the object of discovering where they go to breed. While this might at first blush appear to be an undue invasion of privacy, it can be condoned on the ground that its purpose is to locate the nesting sites so that measures may be taken to protect them. The yearly crop of young cranes brought back by the flock to Texas each fall is so small that it is thought many of the nests and young are being destroyed by predatory animals.

The plan to accompany the migration by plane was given up, however,

because it was feared that the shy birds would be so disturbed at being followed that they might not nest at all. However, another and equally fantastic project has been carried out: Last summer the Audubon Society aided by the Fish and Wildlife Service, sent observers to crisscross by airplane a tract of sixteen thousand square miles of trackless Canadian wilderness in a search for the nesting grounds. Yet not one of the huge white birds was discovered, though the plane flew at low altitude and the country was scanned minutely through field glasses. But there is a lot of country, and there are very few birds.

THE whooping crane stands almost as high as a tall man, and his wings spread seven and a half feet from tip to tip. He is all over white except his wing-tips and head. The wing-tips are black and the head is a brilliant red on top and around the eyes. The call, a deep, resonant whoop, comes out of an enormous, coiled windpipe nearly five feet long. On

quiet days the sound that issues from this loud-speaker can be heard three miles away. This was once one of our most numerous migratory fowl. He used to breed in the prairie States, but no nest has been found there for nearly sixty years.

Whooping cranes are perhaps the most inhibited of all birds, without a doubt the shyest and most retiring residents of the State of Texas, a region whose citizens generally are not outstandingly noted for those qualities. The birds cannot abide the encroachments of civilization, and have retreated farther and farther into the northern wilderness as their range has been invaded by settlers. The Audubon Society is continuing its efforts to locate their Canadian hideaway, for there are so few of them left that they will surely die out unless something drastic can be done to protect them on their breeding grounds.

The trumpeter swan now seems to have been rescued from extinction, and it is to be hoped that the more



horns they used as drinking cups.

desperate plight of the whooping crane can be handled as successfully.

WHEN Cæsar's legions crossed the Alps and marched into Gaul, they found in the Hercynian Forest, along with the wisent, a huge, ox-like beast which they called the urus. We call it the aurochs. It is the ancestor of our domestic cattle.

Cæsar describes the aurochs as "nearly equaling the elephant in bulk, although in shape and color resembling a bull." The hardy Gauls trapped these beasts in pits, then killed them with spears. They ate the meat and made the hides into clothing, shoes and war shields. The magnificent horns they used as drinking cups and as decorations for helmets.

Cæsar's estimate of the size of the aurochs is a bit on the generous side. Actually his huge body rose to about six feet at the shoulders. Skulls found in the peat bogs of England, some with the foreheads crushed by flint hatchets, have a horn spread of as much as fifty inches. In general ap-

pearance the aurochs was certainly very much like a great bull. We know quite definitely how he looked, because there exist ancient writings in which he is described, and a few pictures by artists who drew him from life. He evidently varied widely in color, as do modern cattle, for he is described in some writings as black, in others as white.

THE range of this wild ox spread over most of Europe and the British Isles. In Cæsar's time it was common in all the forests. It had become extremely scarce in the Sixth Century, in France, when it was game for the king alone. Charlemagne hunted urus in the Ninth Century in the forests near Aix-la-Chapelle, and in the following century it is mentioned in the records of an abbey in Switzerland. One of the original Swiss cantons, Uri, is named after it; a pair of horns is the symbol of the canton, and "the bull of Uri" often appears in the local folklore. The soldiers of the First Crusade saw the great ox while passing through Germany in the Eleventh Century, and it still lingered in the vicinity of Worms during the Twelfth. The last reference to the aurochs by one who had seen him is made by Konrad Gessner in the middle of the Sixteenth Century. He says in his history that some thirty were then known to be alive.

The aurochs has been considered extinct for more than three hundred years, but if we stretch a point we may say that he, like the wisent, still lingers as a remnant. There are in England five herds of half-wild cattle which are carefully protected in private game parks. The herd at Chillingham Park in Northumberland may be taken as typical of all of them. This tract was enclosed in the Thirteenth Century. Written references to the herd go back 250 years, and it certainly lived here long before that. The ancestors of these so-called "park cattle" were undoubtedly running wild in the forest at the time of the park's enclosure. They have lived there ever since, and their natural breeding has not been interfered with in any way. That the wild cattle which were originally enclosed were true aurochs can be doubted, for they may have descended from domesticated cattle brought into Britain by the Romans. Though considerably smaller, they certainly resemble the aurochs more closely than they resemble modern cattle.

Whatever may be the ancestry of the park cattle, scientists generally considered the aurochs of Cæsar's time to be extinct.

Then the director of a zoological park in Germany had a fantastic idea. It was accepted as true that modern

cattle had been derived from the aurochs by the controlled breeding of such individuals as happened to have qualities useful to men. Then why wouldn't it be possible, by selecting aurochslike qualities in modern cattle, to breed back to the aurochs? After all, the aurochs had been the aurochs through millions of years, while the changes that made him useful to man—beef-making and milk-giving—had been fixed for only a few centuries. Why not try to reconstruct the extinct animal?

Two brothers, Lutz and Heinrich Heck, decided to try it. Both brothers were directors of zoos, Lutz in Berlin and Heinrich in Munich. They knew what the animal they wanted to re-create should look like, for they had the ancient descriptions and pictures, particularly an old painting by an unnamed Polish artist who had made a portrait from life of one of the last aurochs.

They knew also that a similar experiment had been successful—the breeding back to the original Irish wolfhound from a few degenerate remnants. These great dogs, once used by Irish shepherds to protect their flocks, had long since lost their occupation. After the last Irish wolf was killed, the breed was neglected till it had become much smaller and weaker than the old fighters. Taking a pair of the leftovers for stock, a skilled English dog-breeder, Captain G. A. Graham, had succeeded in developing by careful selection a dog that matched in size and appearance old descriptions and pictures of the ancient wolfhound, an animal that stood thirty-six inches high and, with his forepaws resting on his master's shoulders, towered well above him.

BEING animal experts, the Heck brothers knew that certain breeds of cattle have aurochslike characteristics. Spanish bulls bred for the ring have the same shape of horn. One Hungarian breed is nearly as large as the aurochs, and has the same type of skull. They went to work with Spanish bulls and Hungarian cows, and in a few years they produced an animal which looks precisely like the old Polish painting. A photograph of the Heck bull placed beside it looks like another picture of the same animal. Not even Cæsar could say which was which. This suggests that it is perhaps a fortunate thing for the world that some Nazi scientist didn't have the horrible idea of trying to breed war prisoners back to the ape.

The milu, the wisent, the bison and the swan were saved by man acting for Mother Nature as baby-sitter to the last survivors of the race; the aurochs actually has been re-created after the race had become extinct.



JOHN ROBINSON

AT about nine o'clock of a June evening, shortly after the Civil War, a man lay sprawled over a table in the back of a barroom in a small Southern town.

There was nothing especially unusual about the sight; it attracted no attention. The man was drunk, that was all—a common enough sight in that time and era. He would, presumably, lie there until morning, for post-war Southern barrooms almost never closed.

And Southerners, in those days, had something to drink about! Their defeated land still lay in ruins about them. The flower of their chivalry lay dead, at Manassas and Chickamauga and Appomattox. The few who had survived faced an apparently blank future.

True, things were not as bad now as they had been. Guerrilla bands and wild Negroes no longer roamed the countryside, robbing and burning at will. Plantations burned by Sherman in his March to the Sea were be-

ing rebuilt, and the freedmen were returning to cultivate the fields for wages, or on shares. Towns and cities, too, were returning to normal; the fallen South was slowly beginning to pull itself together. There were even traveling shows abroad once more, as gaudy circus posters in the windows of this very barroom, and the distant music of a circus band, proclaimed.

And as the evening advanced, a curious thing happened. The completely helpless gentleman began to show signs of returning consciousness.



RIDES FOUR

by ROBERT
BARBOUR JOHNSON

He moved, he muttered; his head rolled and his hands clenched and unclenched. A moment more, and he was sitting up and gazing about—with eyes that were not blurred, but strangely intelligent and alert.

The face thus revealed had something leonine about it. Perhaps it was the bushy brows, perhaps the square jowl, or the long scraggly gray beard that flowed over his barrel chest. But at all events he looked remarkably like a lion—an old lion past his prime, but a lion still.

It was, moreover, a familiar face—the same face that was looking down from those circus posters in the windows; with the name beneath in red and gold lettering: "JOHN ROBINSON'S GREAT SOUTHERN CIRCUS—TEN BIG SHOWS COMBINED!" The greatest showman, and the greatest show which that part of our nation has ever produced. An amazing man, his only weakness was alcohol.

Circus people are not, ordinarily, heavy drinkers. Performers, who must daily execute feats far beyond those

of even professional athletes, must keep in rigid training. And circus managers, with all their problems of transportation and exhibition of their shows, need clear heads to cope with them. Nearly all the successful ones, like P. T. Barnum, have been teetotalers. Hence it is all the stranger that the one great American showman who was *both* performer and manager should have been the greatest drinker of them all. John Robinson, the first man ever to ride four horses at one time, and the most famous equestrian

of his day; the man who started out with a few hired teams and wagons, and built up one of the largest and finest shows in the country—the fact remains that he was quite as often drunk as sober, especially in his later years! True, alcohol was never his master. He fought it, as he fought wild beasts, and hostile towners, and the raging elements, in building up his show; and it never quite got the better of him. The amazing constitution bequeathed him by his Scotch blacksmith father, and a long line of Highlander ancestors, enabled him to throw off the effects in an almost superhuman manner.

Often he would be so intoxicated, at performance time, that he would have to be carried out and placed on his horse's back, seemingly as inert as a sack. Yet as soon as he felt the touch of the animal, he would dash into the ring and perform his entire act, without a soul in the audience suspecting that anything was wrong! He did this not just once or twice, but scores of times. And though he passed many of his between-shows hours in taverns near the lot, he could always be summoned forth for any emergency that might arise. On one momentous occasion, for instance, they had rushed in and told him that a lion had escaped from his menagerie; and "Uncle John," rising from his drink, had sallied forth, grumbling "Whar's yer damned lion?" And when he was told that the lion had taken refuge in a cellar, he had gone down after it, dragged it forth by the tail and flung it ingloriously back into its cage—then returned to finish his dram!

SUCH was old John Robinson, one of the most remarkable men that even the circus has ever produced. It was no wonder that even his stalwart sons left him strictly alone, and let him do just as he liked. They knew he could always be depended on, no matter what. And besides, the old man would probably have knocked them cold if they had attempted to interfere with him.

And so it was, on this particular evening. The lateness of the hour, gradually filtering through the fog of liquor, had warned "Uncle John" that it was time to be starting back to the lot for his ring performance. And he was responding, with his same incredible ability. Almost as efficiently as any sober man, he gathered up hat and stick, tossed a bill on the table, and started majestically up the room toward the door. And by the time he reached the bar at the front, he had almost quit staggering, and seemed in perfect command of himself.

The place was almost deserted; but this was not remarkable, with most of the town out at the show grounds.

There were only two men standing at the rail and drinking juleps, while a Negro body servant lurked grinning in the background. Both men were obvious Southern aristocracy of the haughtiest type, who might have been expected to look down on a mere traveling showman. But as the old man came abreast of them, both bowed and smiled at him. "Good evening, Mr. Robinson!" they chorused, as to an equal, sweeping off their tall hats. And, "Evenin', sirs!" Uncle John responded blandly, lifting his own topper and bowing back, also as to equals.

For John Robinson occupied a unique position in the post-war South. He might be said to be its first "elected" aristocrat. His lifelong devotion to the section, his outspoken championship of all things Southern, had won him a unique place in the hearts of its people. "Mr. Robinson, suh, is no ordinary showman!" men and women of the highest social standing would tell you firmly; and you might have had to fight a duel, if you had questioned it! Statesmen, Confederate generals, the wealthiest planters, even Governors of States were his personal friends and well-wishers.

For vivid in all their memories were the services that he and his circus had rendered to the Cause that was nearest to all their hearts. True, he had taken no part in the war itself, and had withdrawn his show across the Ohio River to Cincinnati at the outbreak of hostilities. But no one held that against him; indeed, it was regarded as desirable that so valuable a piece of Southern property should be kept out of the hands of the damyankees, even by taking refuge among them. And there was no doubt whatever as to where the old man's personal sympathies lay. For as soon as the conflict was over, the Robinson troupe was the first to reënter the defeated land, when all other tent-shows shunned it, traveling into the remotest sections, even into Georgia and Florida, where conditions were at their worst.

Robinson's circus exhibited in every town and crossroads hamlet, often building its own roads to travel over, bringing a little happiness and gaiety to the stricken people, playing free where audiences could not pay or accepting produce in exchange for admissions. The circus people shared all the hardships of the Southerners, and the performers lived on parched corn and "goober" peas when there was nothing else to eat, the big white baggage horses so weak for lack of forage that they could barely drag the gilded wagons from town to town. And they kept it up, year after year—when they could have been enjoying comfort and prosperity in the com-

paratively untouched North! Almost the only amusement that millions of Southerners knew in those terrible days came to them from John Robinson's Circus.

And even on its Northern tours, the circus proudly proclaimed its origin. Flaunting the word *Southern* on its posters and its wagons, even flying the Confederate flag from its tent-tops—all in a time when sectional hatreds were high. Small wonder that an almost religious attitude toward the show developed below the Mason-Dixon line, and that endured for generations. Every loyal Southron, high and low, black and white, fervently believed that John Robinson's was *the* Circus; the greatest, the biggest and most important in the whole country—nor could they be swayed from that conviction.

INDEED, when conditions improved and the really big Northern shows, Barnum, Bailey, Cooper, Cole and Buffalo Bill Cody—once more began to tour the section, they met with a somewhat cool reception—an attitude best exemplified in the true story of the old illiterate Negro standing before a gaudy circus poster, while his small grandson, who could read, spelled out to him, phonetically, the wonders it proclaimed: "BARNUM AND BAILEY'S COMBINED CIRCUS, THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH—SEPT. 1." And of the old Negro interrupting: "'Cept one, heh? I thought so! I knows de one! Dey ain't gittin' none o' my money, dem li'l fly-by-night shows! I's savin' hit fo' de *real* 'Greatest Show on Earth'—fo' John Robinson's Circus!"

Such was the standing of the show, with its people. And such was the standing of the owner. So that he accepted the greeting of these two bluebloods tonight as his natural due, and responded with the courtesy learned in his years in the ring.

"Will you have a drink with us, Mr. Robinson?" one of them asked now.

Uncle John hesitated. He certainly didn't need another drink, and he was in a hurry. But he was bound by the iron-clad code that such an invitation from a gentleman simply could not be turned down.

"Very well, gen'lemen. I'll have just one quick one," he said, rolling grandly up to the bar.

"Allow me to present myself, suh," his host said. "I'm Jeffrey Clayton, son of Judge Clayton, of Ridgemont Plantation—I believe you knew him. I met you once, when I was a little shaver. And this is my cousin Gaylord Randolph. He's lived most of his life in England, and has just returned through the North. I was just telling him about your show, and your devotion to us—what is that



"Southern men, Southern hosses and Southern enterprise.' It's always been on every bill, an' always will be!"

slogan that you always carry on your posters?"

Robinson jerked his head toward the windows. "There it is, suh. 'SOUTHERN MEN, SOUTHERN HOSSES, AND SOUTHERN ENTERPRISE!' It's always been on every bill, an' painted on every wagon of my circus, an' always will be. An' it's true, too. There ain't a man or an animal—'cept the furrin ones—that ain't Southern!"

THE other man had been regarding him, with a slight frown. "But I don't understand, sir," he said now. "You see, I encountered a 'Robinson Circus' only recently, during my Northern trip. And it called itself a Northern show, boasted of it on its bills and posters. 'Yankee' all over everything. Can it be that you—er—change your spots while you're up there?"

The old man's brows instantly went black as a thundercloud; he rumbled, deep in his throat. He was not quarrelsome, by nature—but God help the man who called him Yankee!

But before he could say anything, Clayton intervened hastily: "Oh, that wasn't Mr. Robinson's show you saw," he declared. "That was another circus of the same name; an imitator of his, who copies his name and performance. Isn't that true, Mr. Robinson?"

The old man relaxed, sighed cavernously. "Yes, gentlemen," he admitted, with sorrow. "That's the truth of it. It's the tragedy of my life, an' that's a fact. That lowdown scoundrel has imitated me, all over the country; and there's nothin' I can do about it. Can you imagine, the scallywag has the nerve to call himself 'Yankee' Robinson, draggin' my name in the dirt, like that. But he ain't no kin o' mine, thank God; we ain't even distantly related. There's lots o' Robinsons, it's a good old Scotch name. Lots of 'em come to America, North as well as South. I was born in New York State, myself, though I come South soon's I was able to travel; I'm a Southerner by adoption! But this other one's a Yankee, bawn an' bred; an' he's jest as lowdown an' connivin' as the rest of 'em. He's copied my circus, my name, everything, an' there ain't no way I can stop him. His show don't amount to shucks 'long-side o' mine, though: 'tain't no good a-tall." (In this he exaggerated a bit. Yankee Robinson was a fairly important showman in his own right, in those days, though it is true that his circus never had more than one elephant, and lasted only a few years.)

"He don't dast show his face down here, o' course," Uncle John went on. "He tried it once, a few years back, an' the folks nigh tore his show to pieces—wish't I'd been there, to see it! He was lucky to git away with his life!

Since then, he stays in the North, where he don't bother me much. It's jest the principle of the thing; a Robinson bein' a Yankee! It burns me up, suhs, every time I think about it. But he ain't no real rival; my show's bigger an' better'n his. An' it's the original; I can prove it!"

"I can well believe that, sir." Randolph was all smiles now, eager to atone for his error. "I saw your parade this morning; I've never seen its equal, even in England, with Lord George Sanger, sir. That Peacock Bandwagon with those twenty-four matched horses to it! And the one drawn by ten camels, with two horses as 'polers!' And all those cages, with their gilded domes and minarets, the ladies and knights in armor on horseback, those enormous elephants with their tusks, and your great steam piano—it was an amazing spectacle."

The old man nodded, mollified. The bartender handed him another drink, and he gulped it like the first. "Yes, suhs," he said, wiping his mustache. "I give a good pee-rade, no question o' that. An' my performance is jest as good. I got Jimmy Robinson, my foster son, the greatest bareback rider of all time. I got Charley Fish, pad-rider, an' Fred Barclay, doin' the 'Comanche Chief,' I got Emma Lake, the high-school rider who appeared in command performance before Queen Victoria. I had Dan Rice, as clown, afore he quit me to start his own show; an' my Johnny Lowlow's jest as good as he is, in my opinion. I got the largest menagerie on the road, with giraffes, an' a rhino, an' a 'Willopus-Wallopus,' an' all manner of critters. I got the best German band in the business, an' the largest elephant, my big tusker Bolivar. An' then, o' course, I do my own ridin' act, for the finale. Gittin' a leetle old an' spavined, gents, but I can still ride hosses!"

"No one doubts that, sir," Clayton assured him. "Bartender, another drink for Mr. Robinson! I understand you're doing a new turn, this season, suh," he went on.

"Yes, that's correct. I call it 'The Bottle Imp.'"

Modern circus-goers might be somewhat mystified at an equestrian act with such a theme; but they were common enough in early days. Circus bareback riders commonly rode as Shakespearean characters, and those of Thackeray, Dickens or other authors; "interpreting" the rôles with costume and manner, while galloping around the ring on horses! It seems a strange form of amusement, but it endured for almost a century; and Robinson's "Bottle Imp" was only one of many characterizations in his repertory, all taken from books—though the old man had never read a book in his life.

"I wear a green devil's costume," he went on, "an' I ride fo' black hosses over blazin' hurdles, while they burn red fire around the ring, an' clash drums and cymbals. It's quite a turn; sometimes it scares superstitious folks. They think it's a real devil!"

"Indeed? It sounds most interesting," Clayton smiled. "But tell us, Mr. Robinson, what do you do about your beard, when you're made up like that? Whiskers don't quite seem to go with a characterization like that!"

Robinson chuckled. "No, I s'pose they don't, fer a fact. But I sho' wouldn't part with my beard, jest fer one act. It's my trademark; folks wouldn't know me, without it! I jes' make out, best's I can. Sometimes I tuck the whiskers up under the mask; sometimes I leave 'em hang down. Looks about equally scary, either way!

"Yes, it's quite a show, gentlemen," he went on, growing loquacious. "I been buildin' it up for nigh forty years, mostly in the South. I was a famous rider afore I started it; trouped with most o' the big shows o' those days, Buckley an' Wicke, Angevine, an' so on. I was never apprenticed; I taught myself to ride on draft hosses that I trained to the ring myself fust—ain't many high riders kin boast that! An' I built my show the same way, my own ideas, an' my own territory. I built slow, an' built well; I'm satisfied with what I done. I'm gittin' kinda old, these days; dunno's I'll last much longer. But ye know, gents, I betcha John Robinson's Circus'll go on a long time after I die."

"Oh, I'm sure it will, Mr. Robinson," Clayton declared. "We just couldn't get along without it, down here! And you've got your sons to carry on after you, you know."

OLD Robinson beamed. "Yes suhs, I got fine boys; good showmen all, good's a man could have. 'Course I don't let 'em know that; I cuss 'em out, so's they won't get above themselves. But Lordy, they're nigh as good as me now. Oh, not in performin'; none of 'em amounts to shucks in that, though they think they do! My adopted son Jimmy is the only real artist in th' lot. But my boys practically run the show now. I jes' take it easy. John, Jr., he's best of 'em—they're callin' him 'Gov' already, like he was the owner. Ain't nuthin' Gov cain't handle. An' Gil, he's nigh as good; he sells tickets, an' looks after the money—an' Lordy, sometimes we have a hundred thousand dollars in gold in our treasury wagon, after our Northern tours! He sleeps on the sacks, with a rifle, guardin' 'em. An' there's Charley, my youngest—he's sort of a globe-trotter, always traipsin' off some place or other. But he'll

settle down; he's got the show at heart like the others. They're all good boys. They'll carry on fer me, I know they will. I've built well; I can die peaceful, knowin' my name'll go on, after I'm gone."

AND he spoke truly—far more so than he knew. For he was only a simple showman, not a prophet. He could not look into the future, and see how amazingly well he had builded. He could not know that not only his sons, but his grandsons, would carry on after him, with the same show; that it would grow bigger and better every year, going on rails, adding wonders far beyond his imagination, until it was a national institution. And that it would actually achieve its Centennial, the only American circus ever to attain the honor! One hundred years of continuous operation, 1824 to 1924, under one family—and then continue for another twenty years under other owners, including John Ringling. That it would span almost the whole history of a nation, from near-Colonial days on down to the era of automobiles and airplanes. And that its founder's portrait, whiskers and all, would look down from Golden Centennial posters, and be honored by generations who never saw him in the flesh. No other American showman, not even the great Barnum, would achieve such immortality.

But all this was in the far future; and Uncle John was still in the present. Just an old man, slightly befuddled, standing at a bar and swaying slightly.

"But tell me, gentlemen," he went on hastily, to cover his dizziness. "How come you two ain't out at the circus yourselves tonight, where most everybody else is? Don't you want to see the show?"

"Oh, of course we're going to see it," he was assured. "We'll attend tomorrow night. Our plantations are about fifteen miles up-country; much closer to your next town than this one. We're driving back there tonight. Indeed, we'd hoped that you might permit us to accompany your caravan as you go. It's still rather dangerous, traversing Southern backroads alone; all sorts of footpads and criminals still infest them. We'd take it as a favor, if you'd let us join you for the journey."

It would have been an unheard-of request with any other show. Southern gentlemen would far rather be murdered than be seen in the company of a circus! But again, John Robinson and his troupe were an exception. Whole plantation families often accompanied the show for days at a time, as an outing, in their own rigs, eating in Robinson's cookhouse,

accepting his hospitality. For his was a "family show," ultra-respectable; he tolerated no "grift" or confidence men with his organization; and his people (though perhaps not always joined in legal wedlock!) were quiet family folk, with children all over the place. The atmosphere was precisely that of any small town, save for a little more color and glamour; it was one circus that lived up to its billing: "Nothing to offend the most fastidious." There was a certain amount of profanity and fighting, of course, especially among the roustabouts; but then, Southern townsmen were not noted either for peacefulness or lack of vocabulary!

So there was nothing at all unusual about the request. "Why, of co'se, gen'l'men," Uncle John agreed. "Delighted to have you accompany us, far's you like. You'll be perfectly safe, with our caravan. Nobody holds us up, I guarantee that; we got too many fightin' men an' guns along! You'll have a pleasant journey. And the drinks, of co'se," he added hospitably, "will be on me, along the way! Join us when we're ready to start, 'long toward dawn."

"And now, gentlemen," he went on, "I'm afraid that I'll have to tear myself away. Got to git back to my tent, an' do my act, you know. Thank you fo' yo' hospitality, suhs." He bowed, a little too low, and almost fell, but he retrieved balance, placed his hat back on his head with great dignity, and turned toward the door.

"Could we drive you out to the grounds, suh?" the men offered, hastily. "Our rig and horse are just around the corner; it's no trouble."

"No, thank you, suhs," Robinson rejected the offer, with a pompous wave. "It ain't far, I'd rather walk. I need a leetle stroll, to clear my head. Close in here!" he added in explanation.

"Then let me send my boy Sam along with you," Clayton urged. "After all, it's a strange town—you might have trouble finding the grounds, in the dark." Just as though the band music was not filling the air, to guide him. "Sam, will you show Mr. Robinson the way?"

"Yassuh, be pleased to!" The body-servant in the shadows came forward instantly, grinning widely, and opened the door. "You jes' come long o' me, Marse Robinson; I git you dere. Lan' name!" he went on, as they passed into the street outside. "Nev' thought I'd be 'scortin' de great John Robinson! Sho' is a honuh; all my friends will be envyin' me, suh! Wish't dey was here, to see me. You jes' lean on me, suh, hard's you like; I eases you along. Lordy! I's had plenty 'sperience. I's helped Marse Jeffrey, an' de Jedge home, lots o' times, when dey was a lot higher'n you is!"

Old John frowned indignantly, and started to protest, then changed his mind. He should not, he was realizing, have taken those last few drinks. The one or two faint streetlights along the deserted Main Street seemed to be flickering like fireflies, while the plank sidewalk beneath his boots had a tendency to bob up and down! He started out, leaning heavily on his guide, toward the distant, thumping music.

"Sho' is a pleasuah to 'scort de great circus man!" Sam said, as they went on. "I's a circus man myself, you might say. Leastways, I's one by relation. I got a cousin's on de Forepaugh Show. He fires de steam calyope, in de pee-rade. Lan' name! Da's de bossest job in de whole worl', I reckon! Ain't nuthin' grander, less'n it's a steamboat fireman. Sho' wish't I was him!"

Uncle John chuckled. "Well, if you'd like to try it, mebbe I could give you a job, firin' my calliope. It's a lot fancier'n Forepaugh's; his is jest an old wreck. Mine's got gold lions, an' nymphs, an' carvin's all over. Biggest an' loudest one on the road!"

"Yessuh, I knows. I seen 'er in de pee-rade, dis mawnin'. Sho' would like to fire her! 'Magine! Me, in a red coat wid brass buttons, eight white hosses pullin' me, an' eve'ybody in town lookin' up to me—"

Then he sighed, and put the vision from him. "But I's sorry, suh, I couldn't do it! I couldn't leave Marse Jeffrey; I belongs to him. He need me, suh; he couldn't run de plantation, 'thout me to he'p him. I 'bleeged for de offer, but I jest can't take it, suh!"

ROBINSON shook his head slowly in the darkness, marveling, as he had many times before, at the simple loyalty of these black people. Emancipation meant nothing to them. For every one who had run wild, or gone bad, with freedom, there were dozens who stuck by their white folks through thick and thin, sharing all vicissitudes, serving and tending them, refusing to leave them for any inducement. Dragged from their homes in Africa, held in slavery, sold as merchandise for generations, often mistreated—they'd responded with love and affection that literally passed understanding! But then, he mused, wasn't it the same with his circus animals? They too had been captured, caged, forced to do silly tricks—yet they too loved the human captors who had so abused them, and served them faithfully. Life, the old man mused, was a funny proposition! Things just didn't work out the way you'd expect.

"That's right, boy," he murmured. "You stick by your master! But if you ever change your mind, the job'll be open."

Then suddenly he remembered something. The thing that had been bothering him all day, that had sent him downtown to drink, between shows.

"Tell me, Sam," he asked, "you cullud folks still like circuses, don't you? You ain't turned against 'em, have you?"

His companion stared in surprise. "Why, Marse Robinson, how you talk! Co'se we still likes circuses! Ain' nuthin' on this earth good as a circus! Us come fifty miles to see one, set up all night, do anything to see one! You oughta know dat, suh!"

Robinson nodded. "That's what I always thought. But—well, they's a cullud church right next to our lot, today; an' they been preachin' there all day, ag'in' our show! Sayin' it's sinful, callin' down damnation on all who go to see us, singin' an' prayin' an' carryin' on—I never heard nothin' like it! They kep' it up all durin' our matinée; 'most drowned us out. It's gittin' on my people's nerves, bad. An' they're prob'ly doin' it again tonight. I cain't figger it out; can you?"

His guide chuckled, richly. "Oh, dat's jes' dem 'Possum Trotters! I's heered 'bout dem. You don't wanta pay no 'tention to dem, Marse Robinson! Dey's a crazy sec', some kinda 'Vangelists, dat holds meetin's in de ol' white Lutheran Chu'ch, dat de Yankees half-burnt down durin' de Wah. Dey ain't jes' ag'in' yo' circus, suh; dey's ag'in' eve'ything. Smokin', drinkin', chawin', dancin' ('magine a black boy not dancin', suh!) card-playin', a r'ar wid de gallopin' dominoes—dey say dey's all sinful. Eve'ybody in town goin' to hell, to hear dem tell it! Why, kin you 'magine, suh, dey's even ag'in' a man takin' a li'l' drop o' gin, now an' den. Craziness cain't go no furdur'n dat!"

"It certainly cain't!" the old man agreed, heartily. "'Possum Trotters,' eh? I never run across that sect, before."

"Oh, dat ain't dey regular name, suh! Dat jes' whut folks hereabouts calls 'em, 'count o' de way dey carries on. You know, lak a 'possum treed by de hounds! I disremember whut dey real name is—'Afro-American Lodge o' Zion,' or some sech. Reg'lar chu'ch members don' have nuthin' to do wid 'em; dey too crazy. My parson—I's a plate-passin' deacon in de Methodis's, myself, suh—he say don' hab no truck wid dem Trotters! He say dey ain' really sanctified; dey jes' tryin' ter make trouble. He ain' ag'in' circuses; he preach fo' yo' show, on'y las' Sunday, suh. Take his tex' from Noah an' de Ark; an' tell de whole congregation dey should go to see John Robinson's circus, an' see all de animiles fo' deyself!"

"Oh, yes." Uncle John nodded. "Most of the cullud preachers do that. We—ahem—accommodate them and their families with free tickets, in exchange! It's a standin' arrangement. That's why I was so surprised at these people's actin' that way. I've had white churches preach against me occasionally, I admit, though I'm a church-goin' man myself, an' my show's respectable. But never a cullud one!"

"Well, don' blame us fo' dem 'Trotters,' suh! Dey ain' typical; dey's jes' fanatics. Ain' none of us in dis town er any other, goin' pay no 'tention to what dey says! Dere dey is now—dat white buildin' up ahead. An' dey sho' is goin' to it, inside, lak you said. Heah dem now—cleah down heah!"

They were approaching the show lot now; its lights were visible, up ahead; and the music was loud. But overriding it, at least at this distance, was the uproar from the small frame church. It was an ancient clapboard affair, badly in need of paint; and many of the panes in its red stained-glass windows were broken. Its roof was sagging and charred, shored up with timbers; and if it had ever had a steeple, it had fallen down. But what it lacked in appearance was more than made up by the frenzy of its worshipers. They were singing, praying, howling and clapping hands, a perfect delirium of sound, obviously trying to drown out the circus adjoining. And as the two drew nearer, they could hear the stentorian exhorting of a preacher obviously chosen chiefly for his lung-power.

"Oh, Lawd!" he was praying, above the jungle chanting and rhythmic hand-claps. "Save us from Sodom an' Gomorrah! Drive out de visitation ob dis evil day has come amongs' us! Sen' down de Debbil to claim dese sinful circus folk dat has brought wickedness an' corruption upon thy people, Zion! Drive dem out, O, Lawd! Drive dem out—"

John Robinson halted, glaring. "Hear that?" he growled, like one of his own lions. "Callin' down devils on my show! An' me a good Scotch Presbyterian, all my life! By heaven, I'm tempted to go in there an' tell that feller off—"

BUT his companion did not reply. For beyond, the circus lot was visible, in all its glory; and he was wholly absorbed in the fascinating panorama that unfolded there. The stupendous sight of its age: "John Robinson's Ten Big Shows Combined!"

Even by modern standards, it was impressive. Not in size, of course; the whole of it could almost have been put inside a present-day circus side show, with room to spare. Just one medium-sized tent, a few small ones,



By the time he'd gone around once, it



was evident that something was wrong. Saw the reins and curse though he might, the team thundered on.

and a handful of wagons. And its lighting, by present standards, was pathetic; a half-dozen gasoline flares, stuck up on poles, and some guttering pine torches. Even the big top, with great multi-jet chandeliers hanging from its one center-pole, showed as a silhouette, rather than luminous; and the smaller ones were only dimness and black shadow. Yet it was brilliant incandescence for those days!

And the scene illumined was striking. In the foreground, on picket-lines like Army mules, a hundred or more great draft horses stamped and switched tails; the famed "Southern horses" of Robinson's billing, mostly white or dappled-gray. They were gaunt and thin and "pulled-out," like all wagon-show stock, but bloodlines showed in every one; the old man was the greatest horse-trader and breeder of his period. But stable tents had not yet been invented, and the beasts just stood out in the open, exposed to wind and weather.

Beyond them stood the great parade chariots, the Peacock Bandwagon and the Dragon Car and the rest; their fantastic carved shapes and glittering gold-leaf shrouded in dirty canvas, with Negro workmen loading properties into them. But they were amazing, even in silhouette; birds and monsters ten feet high and more than twenty feet long, and looking strangely alive in the gloom.

And beyond them stretched the long array of the Midway, with dozens of small sideshows and snack-stands; mostly closed now and being dismantled, their wild and gaudy banners hanging at half-mast. There was also the ticket wagon, a solid mass of scrollwork and carving; through whose little window could be glimpsed young Gov' Robinson, by tallow-candlelight, assiduously counting up the night's receipts. The old man tiptoed past him, to avoid being seen, shushing his companion, and swung left along the shadowy menagerie tent.

THIS was a low, dim-lit top, unimpressive in appearance, but far longer than any carried by a modern circus; and more capacious. And through its partially lowered sidewalls could be glimpsed some of the wonders it contained, a collection few present shows could equal. The Negro's eyes bulged at a file of more than twenty camels, kneeling at pickets; at half a dozen zebras, at buffaloes and yaks and "sacred cows" galore, and beyond them towering shapes of giraffes, fantastically tethered with halter ropes beside the other led stock. Across the tent rocked the renowned elephant herd, also not duplicated today; for though there were only half a dozen of them, nearly all were male tuskers, with fabulous four- and five-foot

ivories tipped with brass balls. And towering among them was the great hulk of Bolivar, the largest elephant in captivity, a sinister monster glowering in chains; though he chirruped amiably as he glimpsed John Robinson. And in between, stretching around the whole circle, were the wild-beast dens, the unique "cottage cages" that were the trademark of the show for almost a century. No mere little boxlike, single specimen vehicles such as other wagon shows used; but weird twenty- and twenty-five-foot structures, holding whole families of lions and tigers and hyenas and bears in each.

The two made their way past all this glory; Robinson leading now, (for his companion was too fascinated to be of any use!) stumbling and cursing over guy-ropes. Then suddenly they were in the backyard behind the big top, amid more picketed horses and ponies, spangled performers who stared at them, and a tangle of wagons, properties and dressing-tents. And two tall, powerful men were rushing toward them.

"Pa! Pa! Where on earth you been?" one of them cried. "We been worried to death about you; half the show's traipsin' uptown huntin' for you. Don't you know it's 'way late? Long past time for your 'turn'."

"Yeah, Pa!" the other chimed in. "What kept you? The crowd's been gettin' restless; show's been over for half an hour. Pore Johnny Lowlow's been holdin' 'em with his clown songs for I dunno how long; he's startin' in on 'Whoa, Emma!' fer the third time. We didn't know what to do; they won't go home, without seein' you. They'll be tearin' up the benches in a few minutes more—"

But the old man waved them aside calmly. "Now, now, Gil an' Charley! Don't git so excited. I'm here, ain't I? You needn't of worried; I never missed a performance in my life. An' the crowd always waits for me, you know that. Jes' give me a couple o' minutes to git my costume on, an' I'll go in there an' show 'em the greatest ride they ever seen in their lives! I'll have 'em eatin' out o' my hand; you'll see."

"But Pa, are you sure you're able to ride?" Gil frowned. "You look kind of—well—"

"What of it?" the old man snorted. "I've rid lots of times, when I wuz worse'n this, you know that! I'll make out, all right. You two jes do like I tell ye, an' no backtalk! Gil, you git my hosses ready, an' line 'em up. An' Charley, you take this here boy Sam into the tent, an' find him a good seat, for the rest o' the show. He helped your pa git home tonight; he's entitled to it. You can stay, cain't you, Sam? You don't have to

git back to your white folks right away?"

"Lawdy, nossuh!" the Negro guffawed. "Marse Jeffrey an' Mist' Gaylord, dey stay right in dat bar, 'till you gits ready to leave town! Dey ain' even gwine *think* o' me, fo' hours! I got all de time dey is. I be glad to stay; thankee kin'ly, suh!"

"Fine. Just follow me, boy." Charley led him away. "We're really awfully grateful fer fetchin' Pa back tonight. He's gittin' to be an awful problem. Gittin' old, I reckon, losin' his grip—"

"Yessuh! I knows how 'tis." Sam chortled sympathetically. "I go th'ough de same thing wid de ol' Judge, fo' he die! I mos' kill myself, roundin' him up. He sho' git into some places no Judge had oughta be! Yassiree—" their voices died away.

The old man glared after them, fuming. "Gittin' old, am I?" he muttered. "By heavens, I'll take a hoss-whip to that boy Charley, you see if I don't!" Charley was only about thirty-five.

"You better let me help you into the padroom, Pa." Gil took his arm, leading him toward the tent. "You got to hurry."

"Fumadiddles! I don't need no help!" Robinson grumbled. But he leaned heavily on his son's arm as they passed through the men's dressing top, lined with the now-extinct riding "pads" that gave it its name, and into the little dressing-cubicle at the end.

GIL eased him into a chair, and lit a guttering candle to light his dressing-trunk.

"Want me to help you git in your costume, Pa?" he asked solicitously.

"What the— 'Course I don't want you to! Been dressin' myself fer nigh seventy years! What's the matter with all you boys tonight, anyway? You go git them hosses ready, 'fore I tan your hide! I'll be ready, in five minutes—"

All the same, he could have used assistance, after Gil departed. It seemed an impossible task, getting out of his clothes and donning the strange regalia of his ring act. Every garment seemed weighted with lead; he could hardly see, and his head was going round and round. He should not, he again realized, have taken those last few drinks; they'd overloaded even his capacity. He felt an overpowering urge to lie down and sleep again. Maybe it was true, the way they said. Maybe he was getting old, slipping. Perhaps it would be better to retire after this season, let the boys run the show. They were practically doing it, anyway. He was just an old has-been, dragging them down. Yes, he'd have to retire soon. But not now, by God! He was going

to do that ride tonight, if it was the last thing he ever did!

At last he got the shimmering tights on, donned the curious boots and gloves, adjusted an odd tin contrivance on his shoulders and got the mask tied over his face. As a last triumphant gesture, he let the whiskers hang out.

EMERGING from the tent, a truly nightmarish figure, he found Gil and a couple of the hostlers holding his four horses abreast and ready. They were beautiful, perfectly matched young beasts, coal-black, and arched of neck. Their flaring nostrils were as red as their bridles, and the pads on their backs. They were not the heavy lumbering Percheron or Belgian "bareback" horses, such as are familiar nowadays, since the broad riding saddles make size unimportant. These were lightning-fast Kentucky thoroughbreds, snorting and fiery. They were not fastened together in any way, since he would ride them singly and doubly, as well as together, in the course of the act; and it took amazing skill and balance to hold them galloping in formation.

They reared and plunged, as they always did at sight of their master in his fantastic attire, but he approached them fearlessly. "Boost me up!" he grunted; and as Gil cupped his hands and made a stirrup for him, he sprang lightly as a boy onto the four backs, straddling them effortlessly. He balanced with perfect grace in that outlandish position, one foot on each outside horse and the other two beneath him, while he gathered up and sorted the eight reins. He was a completely ageless figure, with his face covered by the mask. Once more John Robinson, the greatest equestrian of them all, as he had entertained audiences for the last sixty years. . . .

"All right, boys, turn 'em loose!" he ordered, then. "Run tell Johnny Lowlow to quit singin' an' announce me, an' the band to start the 'Devil' music. I'll gallop 'em around a couple o' times, to warm 'em up, an' then ride in, full-tilt. Let's go!"

The men let go, and leaped back, scattering to obey him. The four blacks swept forward, loping like an ancient Roman chariot team, snorting and tossing proud heads. Robinson swung them in a great circle about the enclosure; sawing the reins, to get control, balancing in the grotesque straddling posture, shifting weight from leg to leg as the horses bucked and plunged. But those fumes of alcohol were still in his brain; his hands were clumsy, and he appeared to be having trouble with his vision. By the time he'd gone around once, it was evident that something was wrong. Instead of swinging into the

second circle, the beasts suddenly whirled and dashed off back of the dressing-tent, heading out across the lot. A cloud of sulfurous language floated in their wake.

"Hey, Pa! Pa, where you goin'?" Gil shouted, running after him.

"Damned varmints got the bits in their teeth!" Robinson yelled back. "I cain't steer 'em; they're runnin' away! But don't worry, I'll swing 'em around, out here, an' head 'em back—"

But he couldn't. Saw the reins and curse though he might, the team thundered on. Wildly, he wished he'd kept to older, more docile horses, instead of these wild young colts! They were quite out of his control. They were leaving the lot behind them now, heading toward— Good Lord—straight toward that little church!

And suddenly he realized why. Those glowing red stained-glass windows, shining in the darkness! They'd mistaken them for the blazing hurdles of their ring act. They were galloping directly at them. They were going to crash right into the building! John Robinson shut his eyes tightly, and prayed also. . . .

Inside the church, in his lighted pulpit, the Reverend was still exhorting, above his hysterical, clamorous followers.

"Oh, Lawd!" he was entreating, for the hundredth time. "Sen' down de Debbil, to claim dese sinful circus people! I begs you, Lawd! Sen' de Debbil—"

Crash! One of the great red windows burst in, scattering panes in every direction. The horrified congregation, rising to look, saw outside a glimpse of monstrous rearing black shapes, rolling eyes and flaring nostrils, emitting horrible snorts and neighs, veritable figures of the Pit!

And then they saw something else. For soaring through the opening, seeming actually to fly, there hurtled a form that could by no remotest stretch of the imagination be called human! An appalling thing, covered with glittering scales of bottle-green, from head to foot, with scaly hands and feet that ended in six-inch claws, with metallic gleaming bat-wings sprouting from its shoulders, and a long scaly tail ending in a fork, with great horns on its forehead, and a grinning green face of diabolical evil, from which poured a stream of truly diabolical profanity.

The apparition soared halfway across the building, landing in a sitting posture on the floor in front of the pulpit. Then it struggled painfully to its feet and faced them, arms akimbo and the sinister claws glinting menacingly.

"All right," it bellowed in a voice of thunder. "You prayed up the

Devil! Now what you going to do with him, now you got him?"

There was only an instant's pause. Then pandemonium. Shrieking and howling in terror, the congregation broke for the exits! Men and women dashing through doors, plunging headfirst through windows, crashing through shrubbery, in mad flight; the clergyman leading them all, with coat-tails flapping.

In a moment the place was deserted, save for faint cries receding far into the night. And the diabolical figure stood looking after them, hands on hips, chuckling to itself. . . .

It was some hours later. The circus was all loaded, ready to begin its journey to the next town. A file of red wagons, with four- and six-horse teams, with lanterns hung on their tops and sleepy drivers crouching over reins, stretched away down the road, waiting for the signal to start. Performers in carryalls and buggies, blanketed ring horses and led stock with grooms riding, elephants with lantern-carrying mahouts on their heads—a long, long procession.

The two planters, in their surrey, waited with the rest. And old John Robinson, in his glittering buggy, drawn by two thoroughbreds, was trying to force a hundred-dollar bill on the Negro Sam.

"Give it to your 'possum trotters, boy!" he urged. "It's to pay fer their broken window, even though 'twasn't my fault! They tried to bust up my show, but I reckon I busted up theirs. An' no harm done—I didn't even cut myself. The lead mountings on them panes protected me, I reckon. An' I finished up my ride all right, after I caught the hosses. An' I had my little joke, so I'm willin' to pay fer it."

BUT Sam only laughed gayly.

"Lawdy, Marse Robinson! How I gwine give it to 'em? I got to ketch 'em, first! Dey ain't no mo' Lodge o' Zion! Some o' dem been seen ten, twenty miles away, an' still goin' strong! Ain' none of 'em ever goin' come back to dese parts, I 'spect. Dey ain' gwine be missed, neither! An' as fo' dat preacher o' deirs, he wuz heard to say, as he pass th'ough town, dat he wuz finished wid de preachin' business, fo'ever! He say dey's such a thing as a man bein' able to pray too good!"

"Well, I s'pose he's got something there!" John Robinson chuckled. He returned the bill to his pocket, and picked up his reins. "All right, let's be movin'. Got another town, tomorrow, an' another show. Let's go!"

He bowed ceremoniously to his guests, clucked to the team and drove off down the road, disappearing into darkness. The circus wagons started to rumble through the night.

The Autobiography

THE WAR ENDED BEFORE IT BECAME SUZUKI'S TURN TO COMMIT SUICIDE. BUT HE WENT THROUGH THE TRAINING, AND WITH HIS FAMILY ENDURED THE FOREBODING HEARTACHE COMMON TO THESE DEDICATED NIPPONESE PATRIOTS.

by YUKIHISA SUZUKI

I T was about eight o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, May 30, 1945. I stood on the platform of Ebisu Station, Tokyo, having got off the Yamate Loop train. I set down my trunk and sword and looked, filled with deep emotion, at the severely bombed and burned-out district. Instead of the familiar tea-rooms where I had spent evenings with my intimate friends, and book-stores where I bought many books and magazines and chatted with the amiable keeper, I saw only heaps of tiles, stones, and burned timbers.

I was on the way to Hyaku-rigahara Air Base, being transferred from Himeji Air Base. My trip between military stations took me through Tokyo, my home, so I took the opportunity of stopping to see my family. This was my first visit home as a naval officer and, I was sure, would be the last. I said I was on the way to a new assignment, but as the new station was the training base of the Kamikaze pilots, I felt in my mind that I was on the way to my grave. My intimate friends—some of them—"attacked Okinawa and sank or damaged at least one-third of the United States fleet," the morning paper said. I was concerned only with the fate of my friends. While I was at Himeji Air Base, many Kamikaze pilots left for Okinawa. One of them, a friend of mine, was taken ill and returned to Himeji Air Base. He told me all about the fate of the Kamikaze pilot.

I knew that the Kamikaze was the weapon of desperation, but I thought it was the only weapon we young Japanese air pilots could take for our beloved country and people. At that time, the authorities were planning to turn our entire army and navy air force of about three thousand planes, though I was not sure of the number, into one vast Kamikaze, the nobly named "Divine Wind," to prevent the American invasion, and guard our homeland.

Picking up in my left hand my samurai sword with its Navy style decoration and carrying in my right a heavy trunk, I started walking toward my house, hoping that it would be safe and thinking how happy my parents, brother and sisters would be when they saw me, and what they would say first. The street was cluttered with burned timbers, still smoking, and ruined stones, and with fallen telephone poles and wires. The buildings and their furnishings were charred fragments on the ground. There were no street-cars, no automobiles, even no bicycles. Some people were sitting on the charred ruins desperately weeping; some were dumbly staring at the sky, and some were walking with unsteady steps. I noticed a scrawny little man wearing ragged clothes shoveling debris away from a yet unburned wall. His wife, carrying an infant strapped to her back, was dragging up several sheets of rusty tin. They were building a makeshift patchwork hovel of their own.

I called to mind what a pleasant district this was when I left Tokyo to go to war two years before. At that time I was a freshman in Taihoku Imperial University in Formosa, making a special study of the relationship between England and India. I was a student, and not a professional soldier. I wanted to die as a student, and not as a soldier, but when the mobilization order came in December, 1943, I was enlisted into the Naval Air Force.

I thought now of my mother's letter, written to me while I was at Izumi Air Base:

We have a new house. It has five rooms and stands on a hill, so the view from the house is excellent. The people in the neighborhood are very quiet. However, moving was very hard under the scorching summer sun. The removal of your father's collection of antiques and

woodcuts, of Juichi's [my elder brother in the Japanese Army in the Philippines] and your books was especially hard. The district assembly is named "Fujimi-cho," and it means, as you know, "the place with a view of Mount Fuji," and also "invulnerability," so we believe that no matter how severe the air raids may be, our house will be safe. The new house is situated near the old one, so you won't have any difficulty in finding it when you come back. Don't worry about us. We are all fine and are always with you. Take good care of yourself. Good-by.

With this in anticipation, I suddenly noticed a girl walking toward me from the other side of the road. At first I could not tell who she was, though I thought I had seen her before. She was tall and thin. She waved her right arm once and smiled, and by that gesture I recognized her as my youngest sister. My heart filled with joy, and I was anxious to get home as soon as possible.

"Hello, brother!"

"Hello, sis!"

"We are so happy to see you. Do you have to go back right away?"

"Well, I can stay for a few days, but I have no permission. Is everything all right? How is our house? Burned out?"

"Yes," she said, and began to sob.

"Shucks, that's nothing! Did anyone get hurt?"

"Fortunately, no. However, we lost everything we had."

"It's nothing. Where are you going? To school?"

"No, I'm going to the factory. These days there is no school. We have been drafted to work in the factories. Perhaps the factory won't work today. I'm sure now I won't go. I want to go back home with you. Why didn't you let us know you were coming back?"

"I wanted to, but as I was transferred so suddenly, I had no time to

of a Kamikaze Pilot

Richard Neville, the son of an American consular officer in Tokyo, was the boyhood playmate of Yukihiisa Suzuki. Later, as an American Air Force officer, he helped bomb Tokyo. Still later he brought Suzuki (now a student at the University of Michigan) and his book to our editorial offices.

let you know. What are you doing in the factory?"

"We are making parts for the meters on planes. Perhaps you'll use them."

"That's fine, but you aren't studying at all, then?"

"No."

"What's everybody doing?"

"Father went to the office, and Michiko" [my younger sister] "to the First Arsenal. Perhaps Takeshi" [my younger brother] "is still sleeping in the hut. They are all tired. Mother was washing dishes when I left. Now I'll run home and let them know that you have come back. I'll go as fast as I can!"

She ran off, and I followed with my luggage. I didn't need to ask my way. After about an hour's walk in the bombed and burned-out district, I was walking up the broad uphill street beside Arisugawa Memorial Park. It was only ten minutes from there to my house. Suddenly several laughing children jumped around me clattering their wooden geta [Japanese wooden sandals] and shouting: "Hello, Mr. Naval Officer, hello!"

"Hello, boys. How's everything? All right?" I thought: "These children are Japan's hope for the future. They will determine the future of this country. We young Japanese men must do our best to guard and protect them at this dangerous crisis."

THE park on my left stood pretty much as it had been. When I was a student and got tired of reading and writing, I used to stroll about in the park. Now, under the open space in the middle of the park where I used to play with my friends, a large bomb shelter had been constructed, I had heard. The tall oaks, the cryptomeria, and the paullinia were standing thickly there, drooping their branches to greet my home-coming sadly.

As I turned to the right at the end of the uphill street, I saw a young



man dashing toward me. It was Takeshi, my youngest brother. "How big he has become!" I thought.

"Hello, brother. Very glad to see you come back!"

"Hi! How is everything?"

"I'm fine. Let me carry that trunk for you. Oh, but it's heavy. When did you leave Himeji?"

"Yesterday noon. The train was extremely crowded so I couldn't sleep at all. I'm rather sleepy. I saw the bombed and burned-out districts of Kobe, Osaka and Yokohama on the way. Yes, they were all heavily damaged. It's pitiful to see. However, I thought our house might be safe."

"We were optimistic about our house, too, and believed it would be entirely safe, and so we didn't remove many of our belongings to the country. I tried to move your best books and materials, but transportation was so bad, it was hopeless. And when the incendiary bombs exploded, I lost my head, and there was no time to take out anything we wanted to save."

"Oh, let's not talk about books any more. I won't have any chance to read, anyway. And I must tell you, but be sure not to tell Father and Mother, perhaps this will be my last visit home. Thanks a lot for thinking about my books while I was gone."

Don't feel bad. Tomorrow is another day."

"Yes, although we lost everything we had, we haven't lost hope."

The houses on both sides of the street at this point were left undamaged as before, but the pleasant May breeze carried the smell of burning wood mixed with the odor of the burning incendiary bombs. By then I was conscious that I was near my home. And just at the end of the row of the houses on my left, the completely burned-out area appeared.

"Here we are. Look, that is our hut. Oh, there is Mother looking directly at you," said Takeshi.

I saw a woman in a dirty and ragged shirt and *mompei* [farm women's working trousers] standing in front of the hut. I waved my right hand at once. She smiled through her tears.

"I've come back, Mother."

"I'm so happy to see you! It's too bad you have to see our home in such a shape." She gazed at me with tearful eyes. "Everything is lost, but I thank God that none of us was hurt. Mieko said you could stay for a few days. Is that so?"

"Yes, for about two days. I have an appointment with my roommates to meet them at Ueno Station on the first. I can sleep in this hut two nights with you. Say, Mother, this hut is foreign style. It's made of brick!"

"Yes. Don't you think it's wonderful? It's Mr. Matsudaira's bathroom, or what was left of it. When the house was burned, we didn't know what to do or where to go, so Mr. Matsudaira was kind enough to let us use this."

"But this isn't large enough for all of you, is it?" I asked.

"No, we sleep in that dugout over there by turns every night," replied Mother.

"In that dugout?"

"Yes, that one covered with tin from tin cans."

"But it will be very bad for your health, I'm afraid."

"It can't be helped. Father said he preferred to stay here rather than move to another place and be burned out again."

I LOOKED at the hut made from what was left of Mr. Matsudaira's bathroom. All his house had burned, except this portion. It consisted of four brick walls about eight feet high and a cement floor; there was an opening in one side where the door had been, and there was a small window in each of the other walls. The top, open to the sky after the fire, had been covered by my father and Takeshi with a roof made of charred timbers and sheets of corrugated iron salvaged from the ruins. There were of course

many chinks through which the rain could come. Against the walls were leaning Juichi's Japanese-made bicycle, and mine—American made, given to me by Richard Neville, the American friend who used to live next door to me, and for whom my father worked. The cloth and leather parts had been burned off, leaving only the frame with its blistered blue paint. There was the red metal wheelbarrow which all of us children used to play with, my sister's sewing machine, now broken, my ruined electric train and track, and various other toys and household implements.

I looked at Mother's withered figure. I wanted to say something to console her, but I could not. "*Poor Mother! Don't be disappointed, and please live a long time so you can enjoy a happy life again,*" I said in my heart.

Just then I noticed smoke rising from a heap of rubbish at the corner of the garden.

"What is that smoke, Mother? Something is still burning, isn't it?"

"Yes. Your books. . . . Books have spirit and are still burning reproachfully."

I ran to the spot, kicked the pile apart with my foot, and dug into it with a piece of wood near at hand. Shakespeare's works, some of the Everyman's Library, and my favorite books on philosophy and history, all were in ashes. I had purchased them with the pocket-money given to me by my parents while I was a student. At last I dug up several which were only half-burned, and some which were only scorched. One of the latter was "Social Existence," by Risaku Mudai, a famous Japanese philosopher. I picked it up, sniffed at the burned odor, and held it to my right cheek. It was still hot. I felt as if my own child had been seared by flames. "Don't be so sentimental," I reproved myself. Even though I was a member of the Kamikaze Corps and on the way to death, I could not put aside my books. I was first of all a student, and wanted to die as a student. I wanted to die as a human being, smiling and giving hearty thanks for having lived.

"I'm sorry for not saving—"

"Oh, Mother, forget it. It's nothing. We have to start over again, anyway," I said, putting my hand on her shoulder. "But I'll take this 'Social Existence' with me to my next base. Perhaps there won't be time enough for much reading, but anyhow reading is the only recreation and consolation after the day's hard training is over. Many thanks for the 'Faust' you sent me while I was at Izumi."

Just then Takeshi cried out: "Hey, brother, come here and look at this!"

"What is it?"

"The shell of an incendiary bomb. Look, it broke through the cement and stuck in the ground. You can't move it, I'm sure. Try it!"

I went over to where he was standing and kicked it. I pushed with both my hands too, but it didn't move at all.

"How many bombs fell directly on our house?"

"About twenty."

"Twenty? At the same time?"

"Yes, and what was worse, most of the neighbors were away from home at the time, so we had to do our best alone to put the fires out, but it was in vain."

"But it was lucky it didn't hit you on the head."

"Yeah!"

I WENT back to the entrance to our hut and started to take my shoes off before going in when I noticed at my right foot a can with dried and cut-up leaves in it. At first I thought it was a kind of grass we usually use in making rice cakes.

"What are these leaves for, Mother?"

"Oh, that's your father's tobacco. Nowadays the cigarette ration is very short, so he is gathering leaves from the park and smoking them."

"If Himeji were in Tokyo, I could give him many packs a day. What time does he usually come back?"

"About five. He will be surprised and very glad."

"And Michiko?"

"About the same time."

I entered and sat down on the straw mat.

"What would you like to eat?" asked Mother. "But we haven't anything to make a good lunch."

"Don't go to any trouble, please. By the way, Mother, I think I'll call on Mrs. Yamaguchi after lunch."

"That's a good idea. She will be glad to see you. She told me to phone if you came back. Perhaps Ryuta was one of those who attacked Okinawa, and maybe he's dead now."

"Is he? Already?"

"He came back once at midnight, about two months ago. It was his last visit home. He told her he was going to attack the United States fleet on the night of the full moon, so I don't know whether he has already done it or is still on the way. His family had not yet had any word."

Ryuta Yamaguchi was the closest friend I ever had. We met during our second year in high school. He was a young man of frank, unconstrained and humane nature. When we were in high school together, he was absorbed in reading "Plutarch's Lives." The books he read, especially while he was in the university, were



I called to mind what a pleasant district this was when I left Tokyo two years before.

on the ideological movements in society, and it was my greatest pleasure to discuss that subject with him. The close and intimate friendship would not and could not be cut off, I believed. "But now, I have lost everything," I said to myself when I heard about his fate.

I lay down on the straw mat in the hut, my face upward, reflecting on past days. I was interrupted several times by neighbors who came to see me. They all said the same thing: "It must make you feel bad to see your house burned, I suppose. The war situation is really bad. You are the only hope of the country, and we are expecting meritorious deeds from you. If you don't have any place to sleep, please come to our house."

After lunch, I started for Mrs. Yamaguchi's, walking back over part of the same street I took from Ebisu Station. Arriving at Nakameguro, I took the Toyoko Line and got off at Dai-ichi-shi-han. I passed over the familiar roads and curbs and at last walked up the steps of the Yamaguchi house and pressed a finger against the button. Then there was a sound of shuffling slippers, and by the sound of the steps I knew it was his mother.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Suzuki," said Mrs. Yamaguchi in surprise. "Anything new happened to you?"

"No, nothing. I'm just on the way to my next base."

"Where are you going?"

"Hyaku-ri-gahara Air Base."

"Well, come inside, please," she said, and took my arm and brought me into the living-room, and there I sat on the sofa, the very one where I used to sit and talk of philosophy, music and current topics with Ryuta, when the world was at peace.

"When did you come back?" Mrs. Yamaguchi asked.

"This morning. It was a great shock to me to see all the familiar places—and my house—all burned down and devastated."

"I'm very sorry that your house was burned. I want to visit your family often, but bombing by B-29s is getting more and more severe, so it's dangerous to go out now. This is your last visit home, isn't it?"

"Probably, but how do you know?"

"I just guess it from Ryuta's case. I hear that when a Kamikaze pilot comes home, it will be the last chance to see him."

"When did he come back last?"

"About two months ago. He didn't tell me clearly, but he said he was going to attack Okinawa on the night of the full moon, so he has already gone, I think. He was at some air base in Tokushima, one of his friends

told me. Excuse me a moment, and I'll get you some tea and candy."

"Oh, please don't trouble yourself."

She went into another room and soon returned with a cup of tea, some grape-sugar candy, and some photographs.

"Here," she said. "Please help yourself. He liked this grape-sugar candy very much. These are the photos he brought the last time."

It was very hard to look at the photos of my best friend, various poses of him in his flying clothes. When I turned one photo over, I saw written on the back his farewell words to his mother. They read:

Dear Mother,

I hope you won't be overcome with sorrow. I'm fine. Nothing to worry about. Only think of my smiling face. I'll do my best to do my duty for my beloved country. Please enjoy a happy life. Wishing you happiness and good health from the bottom of my heart, and many thanks for your love. Good-by. Your loving Ryuta.

"When he came back at midnight, he went directly upstairs and started to play the phonograph—one of his beloved fox-trots by Benny Goodman. He was crying; I could hear it," said his mother.

At that she began to sob quietly, holding herself in as if weeping were a great disgrace. My heart and eyes were filled with tears. I wanted to get up and run out. I did not know how to console her.

"I can't stand it to see all of you young men going out to die. I wanted to go with him, if I could. His last words to me were: 'It's useless to die now. I only wish all of you will live long, even though I must die.'"

Without saying anything, I looked the photos over again. The memories of happy days with him passed one after another through my head. I had to change the subject and finally succeeded. I talked to her about the difficulties in piloting a plane, about the beautiful view from the sky, the daily life at the air base, and many other things that might distract her from her grief.

"Well, I'm afraid I must go now," I said.

"Well, I won't stop you, because your family are waiting for you to have dinner. But before you go, is there anything you want that I can give you?"

"No, nothing. . . . Well, you can give me a doll, if you have one. I want one to keep as my mascot and to take with me when the time for the attack comes."

"It's very funny that you Kamikaze pilots are fond of a doll."

"Perhaps so, but a lovely doll always calms down the rough atmosphere of the base, and it usually is a great comfort to see the doll in the room after the day's hard training on the airfield."

SHE went upstairs and returned after a while with a foreign-style doll. It was about a foot and a half tall and was clad in a one-piece pink dress.

"Here, I'll give you this."

"Oh, thank you, but it's too big and too good."

"But I haven't a small one; this is the only one I have. Please take it. She will be very happy to go with a Kamikaze pilot. Shall I wrap it up?"

"Many thanks for your great favor, but—"

"Oh, don't worry. Now, my pretty doll, go with him and be a good doll," she said, wrapping it up and handing it to me. I held it in my arm. My heart was filled with gratitude and contentment.

"Well, I'll go as far as the station with you to see you off."

I left the house and walked down the stone steps with her. Everything was uncannily quiet, and the evening mist was rising.

"I hear that there are many inconsistencies in forming the Kamikaze Corps. Is it true?"

"What do you mean?"

"Most of the Kamikaze pilots are students. The military leaders are sacrificing the corps made of students first, and saving the professional soldiers. However, I'm not sure whether it's true or not."

"It might be, but I don't know for sure either. Anyway, we students are not going to die for the military leaders but for our country. It seems to me that it is the duty of all the young men to do their best when their country is in a life-or-death crisis."

"But remember this, that to die is not the only way for you. I know you are not afraid of death, but you must not be reckless. Please take care of yourself until the last moment."

"Yes, I will. Here we are. I must say good-by now. Many thanks for the lunch and the nice present. My warmest regards to Mr. Yamaguchi. *Sayona—*"

"Oh, don't say *sayonara*. It's a very ill-omened expression now, especially when you Kamikaze pilots use it. Please go as you did when you were a student, as if you were not going to do anything in particular," she said with a tearful voice.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to use it in that sense. See you again."

"Good luck to you," she said, waving her right hand.

The train came along, and I rode to Nakameguro Station and from there walked the street to my house again. . . . As I came to the spot from which I could see a feeble candlelight where our house was, my heart beat faster with joy. "Brother has come back now," I heard somebody say in the hut. I took it to be Michiko's voice. Mother was preparing dinner in the dark dugout.

"Sorry for being so late, Mother," I said.

"Oh, it's you. Well, go into the hut. Father is waiting for you. The dinner will be ready soon."

I stood in front of the hut and found Father, Michiko, Takeshi, and Mieko looking at me with tender smiles. "*Poor Father. How thin and wrinkled he has become!*" I thought when I saw him. He had been very fat and was very energetic when I saw him last, and the neighbors and my friends often mistook him for my elder brother.

"I've come back, Father."

"Very glad to see you, son." He was a man of few words, and no matter what happened he did not express his emotion in his face or speech. The others looked at me for a while without saying anything at all.

"I can imagine how you must be feeling now, Father."

"We must start over again." Apparently he was in poor spirits.

I took off my shoes and went in and sat on the mat beside him.

"Oh, yes, I have a few packs of Hikari cigarettes for you, and let's have a drink of wine before dinner," I said.

"That's wonderful. Seems to me you are a man from another world. How long is it since I smoked Hikari last?"

I opened the trunk and took out five packs of Hikari—all that I had at that time—and a bottle of wine.

"Here you are. These are all special rations for the pilots at the base. You can have them all. I get two packs a day, and don't use that much."

FATHER's remark that I was a man from another world proved to be true. Nothing I did nor tried to do in the house went unobserved. It made me feel very bad to realize that I was a man of the privileged classes at this time of emergency.

"What is that package, brother?" Mieko asked me.

"Oh, this one? This is a foreign-style doll. Mrs. Yamaguchi gave it to me when I said I wanted a mascot. Wait a minute and I'll show it to you, but don't be surprised." I unwrapped it as I talked. "She asked me, 'Is there anything you want?' and I said, 'A mascot.' Here, don't you think it's cute?"

"What a beautiful doll!"

"I told her it's too good and too big, but she would not listen. Well, it's my sweetheart to the grave."

"But it seems to me very funny that you brave Kamikaze pilots like dolls," remarked Michiko.

"That's what everybody says," I answered irritably. "How many times do I have to explain why? You wouldn't understand a pilot's feeling, anyway. You see, these beautiful dolls soothe and console us after our rough work. We are always tired out after our flight training, but when we come back from the airfield and see these dolls smiling in our room, the exhaustion disappears completely. Every pilot has some mascot with him when he is at the air base."

"I see. Do you want more mascots?" asked Michiko.

"This is enough, and even it is too big. I can't put it in the pocket of my flight suit. Usually we let them hang down from our belts. We would rather have hand-made ones in preference to those bought from stores."

"But cloth, needles and thread have all been burned, you see, so I can't make you one. I'll get one for you tomorrow somehow."

"Don't bother."

"That won't be any trouble."

"Dinner is ready. Michiko and Mieko, come here and bring these in," said Mother from the dugout-kitchen.

Bowls, chopsticks, and dishes were all set on the dirty straw mat. Though

there was scarcely space enough to sit cross-legged, and though some of the receptacles were not clean, my heart was filled with happiness that I was able to eat dinner with my family.

"Take this, Father." I picked up the best cup and poured it full of wine up to the brim. Then I poured some for the others and myself in the remaining five cups. We drank a toast.

"All set? All right, here's the toast. Congratulations that we are all safe and in good health and wishing good luck for the future. . . .

"Now let's cheer up, everybody. Tell me about the time when our house was bombed, won't you? Tell me while we eat."

The candlelight, flickering from the wind coming through a crack in the door, cast weird moving shadows on the walls. Takeshi began to talk, displaying his deep emotion in his face. "It was only last Friday, five days ago. About one o'clock in the morning, after the raid when Ebisu district was bombed and burned out, we listened to the radio and heard: 'This is the Eastern Army Information Section. The enemy B-29s flew away to the east. There are no more enemy planes over this city.' When we heard that information, we congratulated each other that we survived again, and we danced for joy. Just at that moment, I heard the terrible roaring of a B-29 in the south. I ran out of the house and found one B-29 coming toward us. I suddenly shouted to all in the house and to the neighbors: 'Watch out, everybody! There's one still there! It's coming, coming!' All our family took refuge in the air-raid shelter. Then I heard the sound, *clankety-clank*, above my head. It sounded like many stones falling on the corrugated iron roofs. The bombs began to fall. I ran out of the shelter into the alley between our house and Mr. Amamiya's next door and squeezed my body tightly up against his kitchen door. I thought: 'Now here comes the most horrible moment we have been worrying about.' I heard many bombs falling around me. All of a sudden one bomb fell right near me with a terrible noise. It stuck into a spot about four inches from my right foot. I flattened myself against the door and held my breath waiting for it to explode. Instead, after a second, I found the bomb burning. I kicked it, and it went out.

"Everything was beginning to burn. I can say I was almost drowned in a sea of fire. Sparks were falling in torrents. When I came to my senses, I ran frantically about a hundred yards from the spot. Even now I don't remember exactly what I did. Can you imagine such a scene?"

"Oh, perhaps you can't, can you?" said Mother. "It was horrible, yes,



"This hut, made of brick—don't you think it's wonderful? It's Mr. Matsudaira's bathroom, or what was left of it."

horrible indeed. You know, we used to move all the important things into the dugout every day, but on that night of all times, we were very optimistic about the fate of our house. Also, we were all absolutely tired out. Who in the world can describe that horrible scene clearly? When Takeshi shouted outside the house I told Michiko to take refuge in the park. They ran out with that bundle, and I myself jumped into the shelter."

"What bundle do you mean?"

"The mortuary tablets, Juichi's hair, your box of souvenir coral from Formosa, and your other box are in it. I always kept them together and carried them with me whenever I took refuge when the warning came. I thought it my duty and wanted to save those things at least."

"My other box?"

"Oh, my dear, don't you remember? Takeshi, give me the box on the mattress, will you? Yes, that's it. Here you are. It's quite safe."

"Oh, this box!" I took it up and read the words written on the cover: "Please don't open this box until you receive the telegram that tells you of my fate." Two years before, I had put in it my will, some hair, finger nail parings, and my pictures from the time I was in the cradle; when it came time to say good-by, I had handed it to my mother. It was the custom of Japanese soldiers from ancient times to leave hair and nails with their family when they were called to battle. My family had saved this at the risk of their lives. I could not stop tears from filling up my eyes.

"Thank you, everybody," I said.

"I would like to know the name of the pilot who bombed our house," said Miekko. "I wonder if it was Richard Neville. Don't you think it must have been, because he dropped the bombs so directly toward our house. He knows where our house stands."

"Yes, he knows," said Mother, "but I won't believe he did it intentionally.

Although we are fighting against America, it is a war between countries and not between individuals. He and his family were all very kind to us. I wonder what they are doing now?"

"That's why the neighbors say Mother is a spy or a pacifist," Michiko said.

"Well, dear, I don't care what they say or what they do. Those who repay good with evil are not human beings. Any man, any society, and any country which forgets humanity or love will perish in the future. If everyone loves or tries to love everyone else, war won't break out," Mother said earnestly.

"You are right, Mother," I said. "From the time I was born, they were all kind to us. They looked after us, especially me, as if I was their own child and brother. I still love them. I still appreciate their kindness; but I am a soldier, and it is my duty to attack the American fleet and sink as many ships as I can. That is my trouble, Mother, and it is quite difficult for me to express my feeling. Almost everything that I find or think of is bad or sad."

"Well," said Father, "many thanks for the good and pleasant dinner. It's too bad our house was burned, but it can't be helped. We all did our best. Anyhow, the best thing is that we are all safe."

"Oh, listen! It's raining, isn't it?" I remarked, listening to it pattering on the roof.

"Yes. Gosh, what shall we do tonight? Look at all the holes in the roof. Can we sleep in this hut tonight?" asked Takeshi.

"If we don't sleep here, then where else can we go? You are tired, aren't you, Yukihiisa?" asked Mother.

"I'm all right," I answered.

"Oh, then, let's talk some more, Mother," said Mieko. "It's not so late yet."

Mother agreed, and I began:

"All right. Then I'll tell you about our life at the air base. Would you like to hear about it?"

"Oh, yes! I'm anxious to," said Mieko.

"My plane is a torpedo-carrier. It's very pleasant to fly up into the sky at this time of year. The air is fresh; the view from the plane is excellent; but it's quite dangerous because our planes are all old and so poorly equipped. Several times the engine stopped."

"What did you do then?" Michiko asked.

"Well, I tried everything; and so far, something has always worked. I have played almost all kinds of sports, but I like flying the best. I wish I could take all of you up and show you how pleasant it is."

"I think I would prefer not to, son, if you were the pilot," said Father, joking at me.

"You don't say so! However, the training is hard and strict. Even though we do our best and are all officers, the upper-class instructors reprove us almost every day after the training. They accuse us of being careless and spiritless, and hit us in the face with their fists. I never counted it up, but it must have been about two hundred times altogether." (Even Father and Mother did not strike us in the face.) "At first it was unbearable for me, and I was ashamed of being struck. They called it 'correction.' But if I let that bother me, life in the Navy would be unendurable, and we have to get accustomed to it. I don't know about the Army, but there are lots of things wrong with the Navy."

"While I was at Himeji Air Base, the first Kamikaze Corps of that base was organized, and many of my friends were taken into it. As I didn't have enough training and my health was not strong enough to stand a long flight, I was not selected. Perhaps they tell you that the Kamikaze Corps are formed from volunteers, but they are not. They are taken when their turn comes, according to their training hours and their skill. The planes were so scarce, and those which were going to be used as Kamikaze planes were so old both as to model and equipment, we thought they wouldn't be able to fly more than a few hours."

"One of my friends, Nemoto, said: 'What a pity to commit double suicide with such a poor plane! I hope I won't be shot down on the way. Well, I must go now. Please tell my mother that I went with a smile and was wishing her long life. See you again in heaven.'"

"They were all smiling. Then, the order of the attack was given. About fourteen planes took off, raising up sand and dust in thick clouds. We all waved our hats and hands. We couldn't help crying. Can you imagine the scene? They were not human beings any longer, but the incarnates of patriotism. They went with a manly smile. They were not willing to die. The only thing that made them die with such a gentle smile in high spirits was their eternal love for their country and their people. This is the love common to every nation."

"They stopped at a certain air base at the southern end of Kyushu and waited their turn. You will find the results in this morning's paper. After about a week, one of my under-officers came back to Himeji Air Base and told me about the fate of my friends. While they were waiting at the base for the attack, it was bombed three times. After two weeks, their turn

came. They took off from the base and flew away. There was no change in their attitude. They went as if they were not going to do anything serious. By and by the fatal message came back from the planes by radio saying: 'Discovered the U. S. fleet. Discovered the U. S. battleships and aircraft carriers. Here come six Grummans. Here come six Grummans. Good-by, everybody, good-by, everybody. Many thanks for your kindness to us on earth. . . .' There was no doubt that they were all shot down."

"Well, the situation is really serious, but don't get upset. Takeshi, I know you young men at home are anxious to do something for the country, but don't be in a hurry. It's difficult enough to push the American forces back to Pearl Harbor, but we all must do our best until the last moment comes. That's the only thing we can and must do. Study while you can, and work your hardest to do your part."

JUST at that moment, we heard somebody knocking at the door.

"Mr. Suzuki, Mr. Suzuki!"

"Yes, who is it?" called Mother.

"It's me, Sasaki. It's raining hard now. Is Yukihiisa in?" Mr. Sasaki opened the door and came in. "Things are terrible, aren't they? Hello, Yukihiisa! Glad to see you come back." He was the head of the neighborhood association, the *tonari-gumi*, and his house was not damaged.

"Hello, Mr. Sasaki. Many thanks for your kindnesses while I was absent."

"Oh, that's nothing. I have many things to talk to you about, but let's leave them until tomorrow. How about sleeping in my house tonight, huh? Please come. Don't hesitate. This hut is too small for all of you, and you are tired, aren't you?"

"I can't tell you how grateful I am to you, but I want to sleep with my family tonight. Though it's not big enough to stretch out in, we can sleep somehow."

"Well, all right, but will you come and have dinner with me tomorrow noon?"

"I'll be glad to."

After he had gone, Mother said, "Now let's go to bed. Candles are very scarce now. Michiko and Mieko, you both go to the dugout and sleep there."

"Oh, Mother, can't I sleep in the hut with brother tonight?" Mieko complained.

"All right, you big baby. You can stay here and I'll go to the dugout," said Takeshi.

"Look, Father is sleeping already. Perhaps the wine made him drunk," said Mother. "He was very happy to-



Ryuta said he was going to attack the United States fleet on the night of the full moon.

night, no doubt. I haven't seen him in such a good temper since before our house burned."

He was sleeping in the eastern corner of the hut in the raincoat which he was wearing at the time he made his hairbreadth escape from the house the night of the bombing. His breathing was very faint as he slept. His hair was touched with gray, and his cheeks were white and sunken.

"We had better save the candle now. Let's go to bed," I said. "We have to get up early tomorrow, don't we?"

"No, you may sleep as long as you wish. Although Father must start at five-thirty and Michiko at four-thirty, you don't have to get up so early," answered Mother.

"Take this blanket, Michiko. I'm afraid you'll catch cold. You see, Yukihiisa, these three blankets are from the district assembly. They're not very good. All we received that night was these blankets and two balls of rice each."

"All right. Thanks," said Michiko. "Let's go to the dugout, Takeshi. Good night, brother."

"Sweet dreams, sis."

Michiko and Takeshi went out of the hut with the blanket. After they

had left and the door was closed, there was an indescribable loneliness. The rain was striking the roof harder, and the raindrops from the holes in the roof began to fall on the mattress more frequently than before. I took off my naval uniform, changed into my fatigue suit, and put on my raincoat.

"Now I'm all set. I hope there won't be any air-raid warning to-night," I said.

"Here, use this blanket, Yukihiisa."

"No, thanks. I feel quite warm with my raincoat. Let's give it to Father," I said, and gently spread it over him. He was sleeping soundly and did not move at all. "There, good night, Mother." I threw myself on the mat at Father's right. Miekko crawled onto the charred mattress which lay close to our heads.

"Good night, brother."

"Sleep tight, but don't roll over on us in the middle of the night."

"All right, I won't."

Mother blew out the candle and lay down at my right. . . . About midnight, I was awakened by the raindrops. They were dripping straight down on my face. At first I forgot that I was sleeping in the hut and thought I was dreaming, but I realized that my face, neck, and shoulders

were all wet. "Now what will I do?" Becoming wide awake, I got irritated, but I had to find some method of getting to sleep again. I finally succeeded in turning over on my side after a great struggle. It took a special effort not to wake my parents sleeping on each side of me.

THE next morning I was vaguely conscious of the fact that Father and Michiko had left for work. I was the only one left sleeping in the hut. I could faintly hear Miekko talking to Mother. There was the sound of washing dishes, of the breeze rattling the tin roof, and of somebody walking. I had a pain in every joint. I intended to get up but could not shake off sleepiness and was falling back into a doze.

"Get up, brother. There goes the air-raid warning. I hate to disturb you, but hurry and get up and finish your breakfast," shouted Miekko.

I sprang up at Miekko's voice. The hateful siren was shrieking. "What is it? B-29s again?" I asked.

"No, ship airplanes, the warning says. But I think they won't attack these devastated areas any more."

I heard the roaring of an airplane approaching from the east. I listened.



"These are special rations. I get two packs a day."

"Take it easy. It's only one plane. I'm sure."

The rain had already stopped; everything I saw seemed fresh. It was still cloudy, but the pleasant breeze was sweeping the gray clouds gradually away. And after a while I saw a midget plane flying toward the west in a break in the clouds. "How swiftly and lightly it flies!" I said unintentionally. "Our planes can't fly like that. Well, it's gone now. Let's go inside and finish our breakfast before the next warning comes."

"We are all through; only you are left." I cleaned my teeth, washed my face, hands and neck with the water trickling down from the leak in the broken pipe that had once brought water to the lavatory of our toilet. I stripped to the waist and started scrubbing.

"My, how fat you've become! How much do you weigh?" asked Mother.

"Oh, about 135 pounds. I've taken on about twenty-five pounds since I left home. The reason is simple. I have regular exercise, eat special food, and sleep tight every night. That's why," I answered.

She set the dishes down and stood looking intently at my muscular and healthy body. The weakness of my health while I was a child had been a great worry to my parents, and accordingly their chief anxiety when I

was enlisted in the Naval Air Forces. Now I was made very happy by realizing that I could put her mind at ease by showing my body healthy almost beyond her recognition.

Presently Mieko opened the door and looked in.

"I must go now, Mother."

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To the factory. It's quite late, but I think I had better go anyway. See you later, brother."

"Be careful. Don't get hurt," I said.

I dressed, went into the hut, and finished breakfast. Mother went out to make the tea. I heard her say, "Oh, good morning, Mrs. Uehara. I'm very glad to see you come. Yes, Yukihiro has come back. He is in the hut now. Please come in." I didn't know her at all by name and wondered who she was, but when she appeared with my mother at the entrance, I remembered I had met her several times on my way to school when I was a high-school student.

"Well, Yukihiro, this is Mrs. Uehara. Perhaps you do not know her, but her husband died at Okinawa as one of the Kamikaze pilots of the army."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mrs. Uehara. But when?"

"About six months ago. Everything seems like a dream to me," she said, beginning her story. Her husband

was two years younger than she, the same age that I am, and he flew away to Okinawa after only a week's married life. And in addition to that, her elder sister had her right leg badly burned escaping from their house at the time of the bombing. "We lost everything we had, but what is worse is for me to see you cheerful young men die in succession." I kept silent. I couldn't say anything at all.

After she left, Miss Kobayashi came to call. Feeling tired and uneasy, I was not inclined to talk but only answered her questions like a parrot. After she had gone, I said to Mother: "I don't like to hear or talk any more. Everything has changed and makes me feel deeply miserable and heart-broken—not like I ever felt before. I want to keep still. If it doesn't matter, I want to refuse Mr. Sasaki's invitation."

"I know how you feel, and I am sorry for you, but I think you had better go to his house and accept his invitation. Oh, it's eleven, eh? If you are feeling all right, you must get ready now," she said.

Mr. Sasaki's house was only a few minutes' walk. I was ushered into a room where he and his sister were sitting at a table.

"Hello! We are waiting for you. Please sit down right here and make yourself at home. The naval uniform looks very well on you."

Everybody I met said the same thing. According to my mother, the naval uniform was the focus of admiration of the teen-agers of that time. The Kamikaze pilots were the people's principal hope and thus the especially popular favorite of the day.

AFTER exchanging greetings, Mr. Sasaki's sister left the room and reappeared with three bottles of beer. He carefully filled the glasses and handed one to me. He lifted his own glass and said some words of congratulation on my return, and then I thanked him for his kindness and wished him a long and happy life. We talked busily while eating sukiyaki.

"You were amazed and are no doubt feeling bad about the completely changed appearance of this district," he said. "Since you left here everything has changed. Many families were compelled by the arbitrary order of the government to move to remote districts, and their houses were pulled down to make fire-breaks to protect factories. What a regrettable scene it was! Several tanks would come up to each house, and chains from the tanks were fastened around it, and when the tanks pulled on the chains, the houses would crash to the ground. Some persons were crying. And now, instead of the air-raid training we had when you were at home,

we are practicing bayonet exercises with bamboo spears. The leaders say: 'Kill the U. S. soldiers with your bamboo spears in the coming decisive battle for our homeland. Where there is high spirit, there is a way.' But it's children's play. It seems like throwing stones at B-29s, doesn't it? What can we do with these bamboo spears against the U. S. troops highly equipped with scientific weapons? We at home have no idea what to do when the American force lands on the homeland. I wonder what will be the result of the war?"

Though this was a question put to me, I could not say a thing. Even though we were in the armed forces, we really did not know how the war situation was going on, and we had no more information than was in the newspapers.

"I HOPE I'm not making you feel bad, but when the leaders come to our district and inspect the training, their usual remark is, 'We hundred million people must prepare ourselves to die willingly for this holy country. Italy betrayed us, and Germany was defeated, but we must fight to the bitter end. Hold tight to the belief that our country will be as eternal as heaven and earth. The only thing we ought to do is to fight. Fight and kill the enemy, as many of him as we can.' What will be the fate of this country? What will happen to this country when we are all dead? And yet some of these very leaders have been arrested for black-market dealings in iron materials."

As if to explode his pent-up resentment and to inform me of the complaints of the people at home, he talked. The only thing I could do was to listen without saying a word and nod.

"I was drafted into the army factory service a few months ago, and though I was released after a while because of my weak health, the life in that service was horrible, yes, horrible indeed. The soldiers tyrannized over the workers as if they were their slaves. There were many of the Japanese Military Police in the factory, and if we were absent for a few days, they gave us severe punishment and called us traitors. And when the air-raid warning came, the officers and soldiers hurried and took trucks and got away to safe shelters while we workers had to stay and expose ourselves in the inadequate and dangerous foxholes around the factory.

"Moreover, the food ration is extremely bad, and if we rely on it, we will only starve to death. So we have to go directly to the rural district to buy vegetables, because we are forbidden to buy or sell grains, and if we are caught breaking this regulation,

we are put into jail. Almost once a week we must go to the country and return with a heavy load in our rucksacks on our backs, and we are invariably reproved by the police-detectives and called traitors and spies in the bargain."

I tried to change the subject several times, but it seemed to be a hopeless task. "Well," I said, "let's quit worrying, be patient and do our best. That's the only thing I can think of to tell you."

By the time our talk was ended, it had already become dusk. Though I enjoyed his entertainment and had a good time with him, I felt relieved when I left his house. When I got home, Mother was cooking supper in the dugout.

"How about taking a bath before supper?" she asked me. "Mr. Yasugi's maid came several times to invite you to take a bath at his house. Now go and wash away your tiredness. Here are towels and soap."

Mr. Yasugi's house was just across the street from ours. I went first to the front door, but it was shut tight, so I went around to the kitchen and found them preparing their supper. "May I take a bath?" I asked.

"Oh, certainly. Please come in," said the old man's wife. I took off my getas and went in. She showed me to the bathroom. "Here, this is the bathroom. I think the water is warm enough, but if it is cold, please tell me so, won't you?"

After a while I came out of the tub, scrubbed vigorously with a dry towel, put on the clean shirts and other clothes and came out of the bathroom.

"Are you through?" asked the old man.

"Oh, yes. Thank you very much. I feel quite refreshed, thanks to your favor."

I slipped on my getas and went out. I felt quite refreshed and walked carefully over the debris and around the holes back to the hut. Everybody was sitting around the candlelight talking.

Michiko said to me: "Now, brother, please eat this first. This is my lunch from the factory." She unwrapped a package, and there appeared two balls of rice boiled together with red beans and some other vegetables. "As I carried my own lunch today, I brought this back for you. Eat it, please."

Filled with thanks for her kind intentions, I took it in my hands and said, "Many thanks for your kindness, but I can't eat it all alone. Let's all share it. I'll divide them." I cut them into six pieces. "Now, here you are. Let's eat it first. Thanks again, Michiko."

"Wait a moment. I want to give you a present; this is a Japanese doll." She unwrapped another package and handed me a beautiful Japanese danc-

ing doll. "Today we finished our work earlier than usual, so I went around to the Mitsukoshi Department Store to get a Japanese doll because you already had a foreign doll. I could not find a good one, so I finally bought this. I will be very glad if it will give you some consolation at the air base. Don't you think it's cute?"

"Yes, very cute. Thank you a lot."

"Well, let's eat dinner," Mother said. "We have meat tonight. It's Yukihi's treat."

We ate heartily of the good dinner, yes, heartily and cheerfully. Everybody said over and over: "This is a good dinner. How well prepared it is!" And I even forgot that I had to leave next day.

When that happy dinner drew to a close, Mother said: "Though we lost everything we had and the food situation is getting worse and there are many inconveniences in our daily life, we are still fortunate that we can eat dinner all together like this, aren't we?"

"Yes, we are. Oh, yes. I forgot something important."

"What's that?" everybody asked.

"It's my pictures. My pictures in my flight suit. Shucks! How forgetful I was!" I took out an envelope from the trunk and handed them the pictures that were inside it. "Here these are my only pictures in the flight uniform. Just look at them. I have six, you see, so each of you can have one for himself. I'll leave them all for you, so please keep them in memory of me. Well, it's rather late now, but I have one thing to tell you. The house was burned and the food situation is very serious, and I can say that everything will get worse, so why don't you move to our uncle's house in Gumma Prefecture? How about that?"

"We thought about it, but at present we are stupefied and haven't enough spirit to do so. Far more than that, this is the place from which Juichi and you went into the service. I can't bear to leave Tokyo in such a shape as this and go to the countryside. I want to remain right here in this city, our native place, to the last moment and do what I can," said Mother.

I didn't say any more about moving.

WE slept in the same way we had the night before. When I lay down with the raincoat wrapped around my body, I fell into a deep sleep in no time at all. I did not even know when Mother blew out the candle.

I was awakened by the clattering sound of cooking and of the washing of the dishes from the kitchen. Mother and Father had already got up, but Mieko was sleeping with a faint breathing. It was about five o'clock.

I got up and changed into my uniform very quietly so that I would not wake Mieko, and slipping into getas, I went outdoors. It was a very fine and bright morning. The warming wind of June was soft and mild as if nothing serious had happened. The neighborhood was enveloped in the morning mist and in smoke, perhaps coming from houses where breakfast was being prepared. Mt. Fuji could not be seen. Mother was with Michiko in the kitchen cooking, and Father with a bamboo broom in his hand was smiling at me. It had been his daily custom to sweep the bare ground around the house and take care of his favorite potted plants in the morning when he got up. I was touched by his unchanged behavior, but it was a lonesome feature in the midst of such change.

"Good morning, Father."

"Good morning, my son. It's quite early for you to be getting up, isn't it?" His feeble tone of voice showed that he was extremely tired and was worrying about something, deeply and inexpressibly.

"No, I'm not a late riser any more. At the air base we get up at five in summer and six in winter. I slept very well last night, without waking or without dreaming. Are you going now?"

"Not yet. I must have breakfast and go to the office. I have nothing to tell you. You know what I want to say to you."

"Yes, I'll never forget what you have said and done for me. Well, have your breakfast, and I'll wash my face and clean my teeth. I'll see you off to Tengenji."

"Fine!"

FATHER entered the hut, and when I walked toward the broken pipe to wash my face, Mother appeared out of the dugout-kitchen in ragged *mompei* with a middle-sized pan of soy-bean soup in her hands, and Michiko followed with an iron pot of rice. A jet of steam was rising from the pan my mother held, and the good and familiar smell of soup reached me as she approached. Her hands, which had been soft and clean in the peaceful days, were rough and soot-covered.

"Good morning, Mother."

"Good morning dear. Did you sleep well?"

"Yes. I would not have waked up even if there had been bombing by B-29s. You had better get Father's breakfast. I want to go with him as far as Tengenji to see him off," I said.

After I had finished washing my face and hands, and while I was practising a part of the naval gymnastics, Takeshi appeared from the dugout and Mieko from the hut.

"Say, that's the naval gymnastics, isn't it?" Takeshi asked.

"That's right. How do you know?"

"We learned it at school, and I have seen it in the newsreels."

"Is that so? This is only a part of it. We did the radio gymnastics before the war in Arisugawa Park over there during the summer time, didn't we? Say, can you touch your knees with your head like this?" I showed them all how flexible my body had become.

"I used to be able to, but now it's rather difficult for me."

"You see, a pilot must have a very strong, I mean, a durable body, and besides it must be very flexible, so it may be adaptable to a long flight and to any sudden or slight change during the flight. Even though we pilots have such tough bodies, the training is not an easy job at that. When it is fine for flying, we start early in the morning and continue until late in the evening, and sometimes we have night flying, too. Then we are all tired out both physically and mentally. And if the day's work is not considered satisfactory, we are obliged to run around the big airfield as punishment. We have to make up for the lack of planes by training and more training. The only thing we can do against the well-equipped U. S. Air Force is that."

"Oh, Father is going now," said Mieko.

I fastened the sword to my waist on the left and watched Father putting on his khaki leggings.

"The officer's uniform is very becoming to you," Michiko said, and everyone agreed with her. Someone said: "He looks like Mahito Tani in the movie 'The Navy.'" It was the movie which dramatized the life of the hero Tani, who was the head of the Special Attack flotilla at Pearl Harbor.

Father and I set out down the gentle slope. Most of the time we walked in silence, looking down over the burned district. Thinking this might be the last chance to talk with him, I wanted and tried to speak to him, but our inner feelings were too sad to have a cheerful chat.

"What are you doing in the office?" I began.

"I'm a copyist."

"Is it a hard job?"

"No, not at all. I'm only going just to kill time. But the trouble is that the traffic conditions are so bad. It takes about three hours both ways in a packed train."

"What a nuisance. I think all of you need a good rest. I still think you ought to go to the countryside, say, to Uncle Yako's house in Gumma Prefecture. Vegetables and other foodstuffs are plentiful there, no

doubt, and I don't think you will have to worry about air-raids. You will feel very much better and will recover your energy. It's better than staying in Tokyo."

"Yes, maybe. Well, I'll think it over again. But what can I do in the country? I can forget mental distress while I'm at work."

Father stopped and stood face to face with me.

"Let's say good-by here. I don't want you to be late for the appointment with your friends. Do what you believe is right. Don't be reckless. Be careful of your health."

"Yes, I'll remember and keep your words forever. Good luck to you, Father."

"The same to you," he said with a gentle nod, and I saluted. He turned around and began to walk to the station very slowly with delicate steps.

"Father, why don't you look back at me? I am still watching you," I said in my mind, and my eyes swam with tears. "Poor Father! You have been living only for us, your children. You said once that it was the greatest impiety for children to precede parents in death, but I must go. I'm glad now that I am one of the men who live to do their duty. If the telegram comes, don't be heartbroken. Just think that your son did his best for the country and died thanking you for your deep affection."

I TURNED and retraced my steps toward home. All were waiting for my return. Breakfast was ready for us.

"Was he cheerful?" asked Mother.

"Yes, but just a little bit lonely," I answered. "Oh, look, *sekihan* and *kimpura*! My favorite foods! Thanks a lot, Mother," I said looking at the food spread out on the mat.

"These are in celebration of your departure to take up new duties, and as a token of best wishes for your good luck. Did he have anything particular to say?" asked Mother.

"No, nothing particularly worth mentioning. He just said, 'Do what you think is right,' and we spoke about moving to the country."

"Yes, many relatives in the country have been so kind as to write to us that we had better leave Tokyo while it is still possible, and they are ready to take us in. Well, let's have breakfast," said Mother. We assembled around the mat, bowed our heads, lifted them again, picked up our chopsticks, and began to eat. Mother, after taking a few bites and looking at me for a moment, began to speak.

"We all want to move to the country far from these dangers and difficulties, and Father and I could go without any trouble. However, we can't leave. We won't leave. Mi-

chiko, Takeshi and Micko have been mobilized from their school and put into factories, and it won't be easy for them to give up their work. Who is going to do the cooking every day for them? Under the severe bombing by B-29s and other harsh circumstances, their hardships will be doubled. We will stay here and live together. It is a thing of the past for women to devote themselves only to cooking, sweeping, and light housework. When there is labor service ordered by the All Japan Women's Association or the Women's Defense Association, I, though quite old, and my legs won't move to my satisfaction, take the lead in the work and try to set an example of diligence. For example we dig bomb shelters, foxholes, and holes for water reservoirs. Sometimes we push wagons of heavy war materials up a long slope to the factory. When the bombing by B-29s was not as severe as now, I went to a factory named Papillio and there as the head of the labor service group I worked packing chests of medicine. One must always do his best. . . . When you fall into great difficulties and are inclined to despair, just smile and recall my face and form praying at home for your happiness with my whole heart. I'm always with you. Time and history will solve everything. They will decide what is right or wrong."

Mother finished saying this, looked at me for a moment, and then began to eat her breakfast again as if she had said nothing in particular.

"Well, brother, I hope you won't be late for the appointment with your friends," Michiko said presently.

"Oh, I must hurry. It's ten minutes to eight now by my watch."

MOTHER, Michiko, and Miekko picked up the bowls, dishes, and chopsticks and took them outdoors. After a comfortable puff of cigarette I began to pack all the things which I would need at the next base. Takeshi helped me. It did not take long to put everything into the trunk, but I was perplexed as to what to do with the dolls. I wrapped them together carefully in a *furoshiki* [a piece of cloth used to wrap parcels]. After a while, Miekko came in with my lunch wrapped in a sheet of newspaper, and I put it into the trunk, and then went toward the door carrying the trunk and the package with the dolls.

"Oh, how fast time goes," said Mother. All of them gathered around me.

"I can't express how happy I was for being able to spend two days with all of you."

"We were glad, too. Our strength and spirits are recovered by your coming back here," said Mother.

Illustrated by
CLAYTON
KNIGHT

"We think it is the greatest honor to be selected for this attack and fulfilling our duty to our country."



"It seems to me as if everything passed as quickly as a dream."

Just then I heard Mr. Sasaki's voice. I went outside the hut and saw him carrying two Japanese dolls, each in an elaborate glass case.

"You're going now?" he asked.

"Yes, I've got to. Many thanks for your kind entertainment while I was here."

"Oh, forget it. By the way, I came to give you these dolls. I tried to think of some practical gift, and I lay awake last night trying to think of something, but I couldn't. So I brought these to give to you. This one is Shiokumi—the girl carrying two pails of sea-water—and this one is Fujimusume—the girl with the wisteria flower."

"Aren't they beautiful, Mother!" said Michiko. "We had some like that before the house was burned, didn't we?"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Sasaki," I said. I felt very appreciative of his kindness, but it was very embarrassing. "I'll take good care of them, and I'm sure my roommates will be happy to see them. Thanks again."

"Don't throw your life away. Take good care of yourself," he said with tears in his eyes. Then he went away.

I turned to my mother, put my hand on her right shoulder, and said, "Well, now, Mother, I must go. I'm not sure whether I can or not, but if I can I'll come on Sundays. Please go on living as long as you can. Don't worry about me. I'm always happy

and in good health. Your remarks will ring in my mind forever, whatever may happen or under any conditions."

"I have nothing more to say, dear. Just take good care of yourself, for health is everything," she said looking at my face with a smile.

"Yes." I could say no more. Her smile was repressing something very deep in her mind, and her eyes were saying: "Go as if you aren't going to do anything, and go just as you did when you went to school."

"Good-by, Mother."

"Good luck, dear."

"Good-by, my house and everything in it. Thank God that I could spend two happy days in it." I looked at the hut and the inside of it and then started to walk away. Takeshi had been walking slowly ahead with the trunk. Michiko had the dolls given by Mr. Sasaki, and Miekko was carrying the package containing the other two.

We took the same route to Ebisu Station that Father and I had traversed just about three hours before. We walked in silence. Mrs. Yamaguchi came up to us and said with a beaming smile, "Oh, I'm lucky to be in time to see you off."

"Yes. Thanks for coming. I had almost given up hope of seeing you. I hope it hasn't caused you any trouble."

"Not a bit. After I see you off, I'll go to your house and have a talk with your mother."



Kamikaze planes were mostly old, obsolete types, carrying a bomb and enough fuel for a one-way flight.

"That's very good of you."

"But whenever we talk, we weep too."

After a few minutes' walk we reached the station, and the time to say good-bye came. Mrs. Yamaguchi and I gazed at each other for a while, and finally she said: "I'll see you again, I hope. Take the best care of yourself. I wish you good luck."

"The same to you, Mrs. Yamaguchi," I said and we shook hands with feelings too deep to be expressed in words.

I turned away from Mrs. Yamaguchi and Mieko, while Takeshi, Michiko and I entered the wicket gate and walked up the stone steps to the platform. The Yamate train for Ueno Station via Tokyo Central Station finally appeared. Takeshi, Michiko and I got in the train after it had stopped. It was not so crowded, but several men got up from their seats and told me to sit down, but I refused. I remained standing and looked out through the cracked and broken-out windows at the burned districts along the tracks. My heart was filled with surprise and misery at the result of the work of the B-29s. The train passed Shinagawa, Tamachi, Hamamatsucho. The famous Imperial Hotel was half gone and was almost unrecognizable, and Tokyo Station was only a hollow brick shell filled with rubbish and bent iron. I found that all the districts around Ueno looked like a deserted plain.

After about an hour's ride, the train arrived at Ueno Station. I felt somewhat relieved. It was almost eleven. We got off the train and hurried to the spot where my friends and I had agreed to meet. It was just in front of the toilet. The platform, the cor-

ridors, and everywhere within the station precincts, all were extremely crowded with people moving to the country or going there to get food. All had heavy rucksacks on their backs, and baggage in their hands. We pushed our way through the waves of people, taking every care not to have the dolls damaged, and finally reached the appointed place in front of the toilet. All of my friends were there except two, Yasuda and Nagata, who were always late to everything.

"How was your house, Suzuki?" asked Kawashima, who had been one of my roommates at Himeji Air Base. He was a graduate of Tohoku University.

"It was burned down. Nothing was saved."

"Oh, that's too bad. My house was burned too, but fortunately the furniture and the books were all saved," he said, and then he introduced his mother and younger brother who had come to see him off.

Just at that moment the two we were waiting for appeared. The time came to say good-bye and to put an end to any sentimental feelings. I took my trunk and the two packages of dolls from my brother and sister and faced them.

"Now I must say good-bye to you all. I have nothing to say any more. Be good to Father and Mother."

We walked along the platform of the Joban Line. The train was waiting, and we got in immediately. It was not crowded, and we all could get seats. We arranged our baggage on the racks over the seats and began to eat our lunch. The train started after a few minutes, and the very same scene which I saw on my way to the station spread out before us again. . . .

The military authorities had said that when the invasion came, we could win the final victory on the beaches, that American landing losses would be tremendously heavy, and that it would enhance our position in making peace. But looking at Tokyo, at the casualties, and at the air-raids getting stronger day by day, I doubted that the final victory would be on our side. Many of us thought so, but we could not speak of it.

CHAPTER II

"WAKE up, Suzuki! Wake up! There is no more time for sleeping any more or for being slow, either."

I was awakened by Kawashima's voice. The train was dashing between forests and green paddy fields lighted by the rays of the late afternoon sun. It was about four o'clock, and I had slept all the way. Finally the train arrived at Ishioka, whence we took a train on the Sangu Line for Ogawa, the station nearest the Hyaku-rigahara Air Base. The train was old-fashioned and rickety. After about twenty minutes' ride, we got off at Ogawa, and asked the stationmaster the way to the air base. He told us that it was located twelve kilometers away, and that the best way to get there was by truck.

"Maybe that truck in front of the greengrocer's over there is going to the base. Why don't you go over and ask the driver?" he said kindly.

We went to the place where the truck had stopped and asked the driver its destination.

"It's going to Hyaku-rigahara Air Corps Base," he answered.

"Fine. We have just arrived here, having been transferred from another base. Give us a lift there, will you?"

"Certainly, sir. We start in just a minute."

After several Navy men had finished loading some heavy boxes on the truck, it started. As the truck was using charcoal for its fuel, the generator was, of course, on the back of the truck just behind the cab. The smoke fumes and the carbon dioxide gas that poured out of it made us sick, since we were sitting beside it. In addition, the truck could not go very fast, the road was very rough, and the truck stopped twice, once because of engine trouble and once to replenish the supply of charcoal.

It was not long before we reached the outskirts of the town and were riding through beautiful and quiet green fields veiled by the shades of evening. Children were playing hide-and-seek and blindman's buff in the road in front of the farmhouses dotting both sides. Passing this peaceful scene, the truck finally turned to the right into the broad and long straight road to the gate of the corps base. The noise of the engines from the airfield could be heard.

"At last we're here," murmured Kawashima beside me. The rest had kept silent, but that was the way all of us felt. When I realized that we had finally come to the last place in which to guard our homeland, and that we were going to dedicate everything we had, body, spirit, and all the knowledge we had acquired since the time we were born, all for the country, I became tense. I also had the feeling of having come to a crematory.

During my stay at home I did not worry or even think about the punishment we might get for stopping over without permission, and I had a pleasant and memorable time with my family. But when I saw the gate of the base far in the distance, I became rather ill at ease. To tell the truth, it was the second time that I had stopped without leave on the way to a new post. When Takasaki and I were transferred on December 30, 1944, from Izumi Air Base in Kagoshima Prefecture, where we had finished the elementary flight training course, to Himeji Air Base, we stopped at Takasaki's house for three days and greeted the new year there. I recalled how we had been treated upon our arrival at Himeji Air Base. As soon as we got there the second day of January, 1945, we went to the gunroom to make the inaugural calls on the upper-class officers, which was the custom in the naval service, and there one of the senior officers, though he was an ensign as we were, asked: "Did you come directly to this base?" I

replied: "No, we were transferred on the 30th of the last month." Then he said in a harsh tone of voice: "You confessed it! You can't fool us, because we've got the telegram from Izumi Air Base about your coming. You could have arrived here on the 31st, if you had come directly, couldn't you? What are you going to say in your own defense?"

"Yes," I answered. "We stopped at Takasaki's house. We haven't any excuse for it."

Then other officers who were drinking sake around the stove cried out: "The big bums! Punish them severely! What impertinent fellows they are!" Later he took us to our quarters, took away our short swords and hats, and then beat each of us on the face with his fists several times in succession in the presence of our friends who were in the barracks, as a warning to them, and we were prohibited from leaving the barracks for some weeks. . . . Accordingly, as the truck came nearer to the gate, I took it for granted that we would probably get the same or much worse punishment.

The truck passed the gate, and we saluted back to the present-arms of the sentry, and it stopped just in front of the base headquarters, which was a three-story wooden foreign-style building. We got off the truck with our packages and stood there. While we were waiting for the officer of the day, a friend of ours by the name of Hiroshi Shimizu, a graduate of Nippon University who had been transferred from Himeji Air Base about two weeks before we were, came running in his flight suit from the barracks on the opposite side of the road.

"Hello, you fellows, glad to see you here," he said.

"Hello, you look happy," I said.

"Yes, rather, but this is a terrible place. As you have found out, it's far from a city, and they say that the training is going to be extraordinarily strict. But rations and food are much better than at Himeji. By the way, did you come here directly from Himeji?"

"Don't ask in such a loud voice. We stopped two days at home," answered Yasuda.

"Oh, two days, huh? How I envy you! I came here directly. I'm sorry I was so simple-minded."

While we were talking, a lieutenant came out of the duty-room with an arm-band of black and yellow stripes, which was the insignia of the officer of the day.

"Officer of the day, we ten have just arrived here, having been transferred from Himeji Air Base," said Seiji Suzuki, a graduate of Tokyo University of Commerce and Industry. We all saluted the officer of the day.

"Oh, you are the fellows from Himeji, eh? I see," he said, and cast a suspicious glance at us. By that tone of voice and behavior, we understood that he was one of the professional soldiers, for they thought the Navy was theirs, and they were always against us reserve officers who had once been students of universities and colleges.

"All right; go to the third building over there; the chief of the soldier-servants will tell you about your billet," he said at last, starting back into his room again. At that we all felt relieved.

"Yes sir," said Suzuki, and picking up our packages again, we walked toward the barrack pointed out to us.

"Oh, it's lucky he didn't ask anything about our stopping over," Kawashima said with a smile.

"It's too early yet to feel relieved, though," Suzuki said, "until we finish the inaugural calls on the upper-class officers."

We entered the first barrack to go through to the second, and from there to the third, which was ours. As we went along the passage in the middle of the first barrack, I was called back by a voice.

"Aren't you Suzuki?"

At first I didn't know whether he was calling me or Seiji Suzuki, but when I peered into the semi-darkness, I saw Horibe standing there smiling. He was a graduate of Kyoto Imperial University and was one of my roommates at Izumi Air Base. He had been transferred to Usa Air Base as the pilot of a torpedo-carrier two months before me. At that time I had been in bed with bronchitis as a result of excessive exhaustion.

"Oh, it's you, Horibe! I've just arrived from Himeji Air Base. How are you?"

"I'm first rate as always. How are you?"

"I've completely recovered now, thanks."

"That's good. Then we can go together this time, huh?" By this time, the word "go" meant "to go to Okinawa" or "to die." In fact, we all had the thought that Okinawa was the place where they would bury what was left of us.

"Yes, I've caught up with you at last. I believe I can now work as hard as you do. How about the other fellows? How are they?"

"Well, Noguchi is dead. He was killed when our base, Usa, was heavily bombed by B-29s," he said in a regretful tone.

A friend's death is indeed a sad event for us all, though our own fate was really uncertain, and friendship, I believe, is immortal. We had died, we were dying, and we would die one

by one, but our only wish was that the next generation after us would exert themselves to bring the brighter and happier life to this country and to the world, climbing over our dead bodies. That was the general thought and feeling among us ex-students.

"Well," I said with a sigh, "we can meet him soon in heaven!"

"Yes we can. Well, let's talk more later."

"I'll be glad to. We're going to be billeted in the third building over. See you again." Saying this, I went to the spot where my companions had been waiting for me, and we walked on again through the second building to the third, a barrack made of wood: it was a long one-storied building divided into twenty big rooms. When we were about to enter the barrack assigned to us, I found many empty cartridges scattered on the ground in front of the central entrance.

"What are these cartridges doing here?" I asked of Shimizu lightly.

"Oh, those are from P-51s. The other day this base was attacked by some that came from Iwo Island. This is one of the three biggest bases in the Tokyo area, and the enemy is aiming at them to destroy them completely. It's only natural, because this is the main base of torpedo-carriers and dive-bombers, and there is a base of Zero fighters at the east end of the airfield. Some day soon we will get another severe attack, no doubt. Come on, let's go to your room and get ready for supper."

We entered the main door, pushing aside the black curtain hanging there, went straight ahead to the center of the building and then turned right. Ahead of us were about five rooms on each side of the dark passage, which was about a hundred meters long. Shimizu told us that the first room on the left was his and that he shared it with two other friends, Uchida and Kanamori, whom we knew fairly well. The first one on the right was the washroom, the second was a store-room, while the third, room number 225, was ours.

"Here we are. This is your room. It may be rather small for ten of you, but as there is no other vacant room in this building, it can't be helped."

WHEN we opened the door and went into the assigned room, stifling and musty smells assailed our nostrils. However, Hirata and Sadayasu Shimizu, both formerly students at Osaka University of Commerce, went over toward the windows. Kanayama, a student of Waseda University, lit a match and pulled the blackout curtains down, as they were still up, and after that we turned on the light. There was only one bulb. The room seemed to have been left uncleaned.

As one entered the door, there was a row of chests of drawers that divided the room into two parts, living-room and sleeping-room. The sleeping portion was twice the size of the other. In the living-room there were three desks and one table.

"How small and dirty this is!" complained Nagate, a student of Waseda University.

"Yes, really dirty. However, it's no use complaining about it now. Let's clean it up tomorrow. First of all, we have to pay an inaugural call on the upper-class officers before supper, so let's decide in which bed each of us is going to sleep," Seiji Suzuki, as head of our group, suggested.

"You're carrying the copy of our transfer orders, aren't you, Seiji?" asked Yasuda.

"Yes, but I won't give it to them unless they ask for it."

While we were drawing lots, Shimizu, Uchida, Kanamori, and some other friends whom all of us knew, came in and were very pleased to see us and to have the opportunity of being with us again. Anyhow, as the result of the lot, I was obliged to take the lower bed of the bunk farthest from the window, naturally the darkest and most poorly ventilated bunk of all.

It was essential in the Navy, although it might also have been true everywhere else in the services, to call on the upper-class officers or on friends who had arrived before we did to say to them, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance," or, "I'm very glad to see you again." It was one of the essential etiquettes.

We went over to the headquarters first to see the commander-in-chief of the base, being taken by the officer of the day. When we entered his room and told him that we ten had arrived from Himeji Air Base, he got up from his swivel chair, and all he said was: "It that so? Well, do your best and hold out until the last moment." Next we called on the chief of the Second Air Corps; which was the torpedo-carrier corps; and then on the upper-class officers who were going to be our instructors in the flight training. One of them asked us about our flight hours, and we told him that most of us had already piloted more than one hundred hours up until then, and I was surprised to learn by their comments that we were almost the highest among our group in number-of-hours' training. They were about as abrupt as the commander-in-chief and said about the same thing. They did not ask about the delay in our arrival; so when we finished calling on all of them, we felt relieved.

On the way back to our room, we went to the dining-room to have our supper. We were all hungry and impatiently waited for the soldier-

servants to serve the supper. The room was gloomy and the meal was not particularly good.

When we got back to our room, Shimizu, Uchida, and the others had been waiting for us, and as soon as we entered the room, Shimizu asked the question they all wanted to hear: "Were you quite safe? I mean, didn't they ask anything about the delay in your arrival?"

"No, not a thing. Everything went fine. They only told us that we have to make all the preparations for the training without any slip. That's all. If we had known that everything would go as well as this, we would have stayed one more day," I said.

My roommates agreed that we should have.

"Say, don't talk so fresh," Shimizu said jokingly. "At any rate, you are lucky. Well, just taste these cookies from my girl friend. She made them with her own hands, so the letter in the box says."

During the war many romances took place between pilots and young girls. We pilots, especially the naval ones, were really made much of by the girls whenever we went out. We were amazed when we heard that in a certain district near a certain air base in southern Kyushu, which was the final base for Kamikaze planes, it was the greatest honor for a family to marry their daughters to Kamikaze pilots, and the girls were willing, though they knew the pilots' lives were just like candle lights flickering in the wind. There was nothing of a calm mind and attitude among some of the girls, but only blind and tragic passion.

As I myself had nothing particular to talk about, I changed into a fatigue suit and left the room to call on Horibe. I found him in his room sitting at a desk writing a letter. Some of his roommates were reading magazines, and some were changing into night clothes. Altogether there were seven men in the room.

"Hi, Horibe, am I intruding?" I asked.

"Oh, no. Don't be so polite. Come here and take this chair and make yourself comfortable," he said.

"Thanks, but it's rather late, so I can't stay long. I've just come because I wanted to get some news about what happened to our group while we were apart," I said, as I took the chair.

"We have a lot of things to talk about, and I don't know where to begin. I haven't a thing to treat you with. Oh, yes, here's some apples. Let's eat them and talk," he said and handed me an apple. "Did many Special Attack planes go from Himeji Base while you were there?"

"Yes, about thirty, and that was all that were available for the attack and

the only ones able to withstand a long flight. Most of the pilots were our former instructors."

"Many of our classmates from the base at USA—the Fourteenth Class of Student Reserve Officers—left as members of the Hachiman Kamikaze Corps which consisted of both dive-bombers and torpedo-carriers. Do you know that Nakagaki went to Okinawa?"

"No, did he?"

"Yes, and Tahira, Nakajima, Inoue, Oishi, Sato and many others. They've all gone," he said in a low voice. "It's terrible to have to say that this one is dead and that one, and so on one by one. Let's take a look at the pictures in this album and recall their cheerful living faces." He took an album off the shelf behind him, and we began turning pages. Our friends were smiling, but although it might be my fancy, they looked sad in the pictures. "Oh, yes, Ono went too. He was a nice fellow, wasn't he? I'm really sorry I failed to be selected for that particular Special Attack group." That was the feeling all of us had who had remained. The living shapes of my friends came out quietly before my eyes one after another and faded in a mist of tears.

I RECALLED the farewell ceremony at Himeji: Under the bright sunshine of April, all the personnel of the air base gathered in front of the airplane shed and waited for the arrival of the members of the Special Attack Corps from their rooms. In front of the sheds on a long table covered with a white tablecloth were various foods ready to serve in honor of their heroic departure and for the purpose of wishing them good luck: many bottles of sake, sake cups, dishes of dried cuttlefish, dried chestnuts, sea weed, and balls of rice with red beans.

Soldier mechanics were carefully testing the engines of the planes which were to be used for the attack and which our friends were going to pilot, and the noise was loud and continuous. The planes for the Special Attack tactics at that time consisted almost entirely of the ones which had been used as training planes, and if they were thought capable of carrying a bomb and of flying to their targets with enough fuel for a one-way flight, they were going to be used for the purpose of overcoming the ever-increasing handicap of diminishing air strength, no matter how poor and old their equipment might be. Of course we hoped to be able to hit the American fleet, but we also knew that this was almost impossible on account of the heavy barrage from the American anti-aircraft guns, because of the American fighters flying up in the sky near Okinawa to watch for our attack, and due to the wretched condi-

tion of our own equipment. What made us especially uneasy was the fact that we wondered how long we would be able to fly such rickety planes.

However, once the Special Attack planes took off from the base, they did not and would not come back again. If they did come back, due to engine trouble or some other unexpected accident, which often happened, the pilots were usually blamed and railed at by the upper-class professional officers with many abusive words, "coward," "good-for-nothing," and so on. Though we had deep worry and mental agony that was hardly possible to express, I knew that the only thought that made these men go in such high spirits and that stirred us so was the belief that the destiny of the country would be improved, even a little, by our devotion to duty. Though it might be a desperate effort against the enormous American Air Forces, it was the only tactic that our country could take, so we had to go.

As we waited near the warming-up planes, our classmates appeared wearing new flight clothes on the back of which was painted a small national flag, a crimson disk on a white ground. They had green parachute belts. White silk scarves were around their necks. Some of them wore a white cloth around their flight helmets; some had sprays of cherry blossoms which was the symbol of young and vigorous soldiers, especially young pilots, as the beautiful but fragile blossoms bloomed for only a few days and then fell just like the young men who died in their prime. Some had small dolls or other mascots hanging from their belts.

"Hi, everybody. Thank you very much for what you've done for me all this time. I'll wait for you in heaven." "All right. I'll be there soon after you. Have you anything you want me to say to your parents?" "No, nothing. If you meet them, please tell them that I said not to be discouraged and that I went in high spirits." "All right. Good luck."

Such was the hasty and confused conversation among us. Though we had many things to say, as it was the last chance to have a talk with them, we could not say more than that. We shook hands with each of them, and they went to the table for the farewell ceremony. The car of the commander-in-chief arrived, and he got out of it and stood on a small box near the table to give a farewell address to the pilots. His voice could not be heard very clearly on account of the sound of the airplane engines.

"It is my greatest honor and pleasure to make an address at this time of your departure. It can really be said that the destiny of our country rests on your shoulders, you pilots. I hope

you will give full play to the skill you have acquired and to the energy you have stored up for this purpose. However, be calm and firm, and it is my hope that you achieve the success you expect." Coming down from the box, he raised his sake cup as a toast to their good luck, and then they all filled their cups and drank. Tears welled up in our eyes incessantly as we watched them. The party ended with the address in reply of the chief of the corps.

"We, as young men, are only too glad to go to the attack for the sake of our beloved country. We think it the greatest honor to be selected as the members of this Corps and to be favored with the opportunity of taking part in this attack and fulfilling our duty to our country. I, representing all the others, thank you for what you have done for us. Goodby."

They rushed to their planes. Some came up to us, their closest friends, and shook hands vigorously saying, "Let's meet at Yasukuni Shrine," [where those were enshrined who died in battle or in the service of their country]. "All right. Reserve a place for me."

THAT would be the last time to hear their voices and feel the warmth of their hands. Their cheerful smiles, soft voices, and beautiful though pathetic attitude of performing their duty for the country was not to be forgotten, and we could not believe that they were going out to die. They ran to their planes, climbed into the seats, and examined the condition of the engines. Seeing the planes ready to start, the chief raised his hands, and the planes began to move to the place of taking off. We waved our hats and hands frantically and cried "Good-by, good luck, and good results," but it was hardly possible to be heard due to the roar of the engine motors. Some of them answered by waving their hands. The chief's plane took off first and others in succession without any accident, raising clouds of dust. When all of them had taken off, they made up the formation and flew three times around above the air field and headed southwest toward the final base in the southern part of Kyushu. Their planes became smaller and smaller, first like eagles, then sparrows, and then flies, and then tiny black dots and disappeared into the white cloud hanging quietly in the distant blue sky. We just stood looking without a word or a move. They had gone away and would never come back.

The second of the three installments into which we have divided this revealing autobiography of a Kamikaze Pilot will appear in our forthcoming January issue.

HE LEFT TEXAS TO GET AWAY FROM HIS REPUTATION AS A GUN-FIGHTER. BUT HERE AT THIS VERY DIFFERENT RANCH ON THE CALIFORNIA COAST WHERE THEY CALLED HIM DON JEFF, LIFE WAS NOT TOO PEACEFUL EITHER.



IN THE year 1907 Theodore Roosevelt was president, Los Angeles had a population of over a quarter of a million, and Jeff Decker had a thirst.

He sat on the corral rails, dreaming of water and tugging gently on the rope that led to the ring in the nose of the big red bull. Water—or canned tomatoes. Canned tomatoes were nice, very nice. A man could punch two holes in the top of the can with his knife, and let the red acid juice trickle down his throat. . . .

And then there was lemonade. Not enough had been written and sung about lemonade, yellow in a pitcher, with a big piece of ice tinkling gently against the glass. . . .

And there was always beer, brown, and with a big collar foaming over the sides of the mug. The bartender sliced the foam away, or should, and the beer was cold enough to form beads on the outside of the mug, and—

No, water was the thing. Simple, plain, old-fashioned water. You could

serve it in a glass with a nice dainty stem, or in an old-fashioned tumbler, or you could fill buckets with it and lift them in your two hands, the water running out and soaking your shirt. You could stick your face down into a watering trough full of it, or you could dip your hat in and lift up as much of it as you wanted. It was nice with a little ice in it, or cold from a running stream, but it was not too bad even warm from the sun and—

Big Red, the bull, bawled angrily and pawed at the ground, sending clouds of dust powdering aloft into the noisy air. Jeff Decker instinctively threw up a hand to cover his nose. A little more dust, and he'd be jerked beef, ready to hang on the line.

His movement startled the enraged bull. Big Red backed, pulling the nose-lead after him. Jeff slid off the rails, playing the rope. That pull had to be gentle. Big Red had once killed a hasty man who had pulled too hard on his nose.

Big Red swung his rump to the south, and Jeff saw what had angered

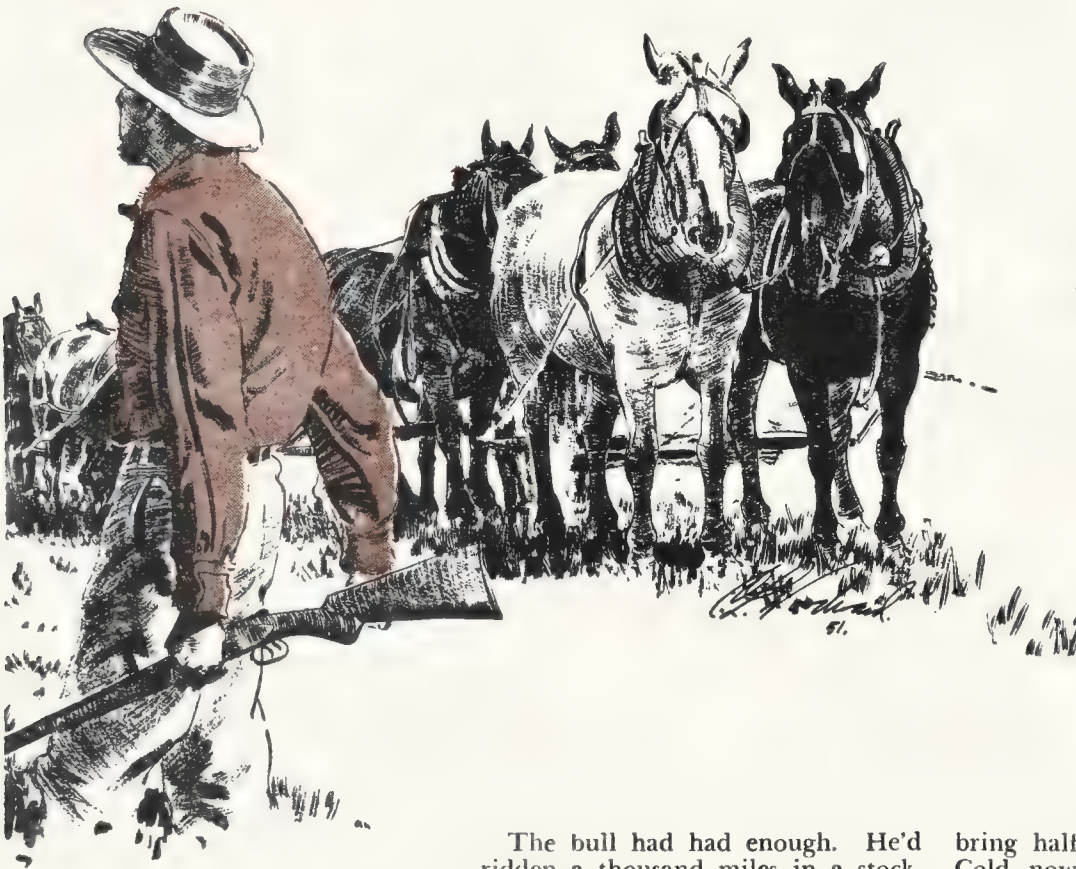
the animal. Not a hundred yards away a switch engine had pulled up. It was snorting contentedly while the fireman filled its boiler from an overhead waterspout. The foot-wide column of water hit the locomotive and splashed down the hot iron, sending up clouds of steam, wasting a good part of itself on the ground around the big wheels.

Jeff Decker swore soundlessly. This must be the Machine Age the papers were writing about. Let a man and a thousand-dollar bull die of thirst while a little old dinky locomotive got all it could drink and more. "Bull," Jeff mumbled, "if I ever get me a ranch, I'm going to build a water wagon to drive around on."

For a moment he thought of tying Big Red to the fence while he made a dash for the water tower. Then he leaned back, sighing, and hitched his hat down to cover more of his face. The bull would only settle back and pull the ring out of his nose.

Jeff lowered his head, hunched his shoulders, and waited.

Kingdom by the Sea



by
RICHARD
WORMSER
and
DAN
GORDON

Dry ages later, a voice behind him said: "That bull for the Buckster Ranch?"

Jeff, instead of giving the question a simple "Yes," tried to say, "He sure is." The noise came out something like: "Ed schor." He tried again, twisting around to look at the man who had come to receive the bull and so release him, Jeff. "Kraw, mmm."

"You tongue-tied?" The man was not more than five feet five or six. He was lean and tough as a leather quirt. Blue eyes were startling in a face as wind-dried and sunburned as an old saddle.

As the man swung up on the rails, Jeff noticed the gun that flapped away from his leg. Guns. Always guns! Funny to see them in the middle of a city this way; but then, a few old-timers still wore six-shooters when they transported stock. But—

The man said: "I'm Mr. McReuben, superintendent of the Buckster." As he spoke, he reached for the lead rope.

The bull had had enough. He'd ridden a thousand miles in a stock-car; he'd been deposited in this strange and dusty corral; he'd not been watered. Now a stranger, a man he'd never seen before, was tugging at his nose. He went back, pawing and bawling, snorting defiance, his little eyes getting red and fierce.

Jeff grabbed the rope, and went after him, playing him down, teasing him, soothing him with grunts and threatening him with small tugs until the bull stood, head up, but with slackened rope.

"You're a good stock man, if you are tongue-tied," Mr. McReuben said. "You're all right. I was wondering why they'd send a dummy with that bull. You always been dumb, or was it a mishap?"

Jeff swallowed desperately. Here in the middle of the corral, the dust was worse than it had been at the rails. Unwilling to let go of Big Red, he managed to get enough saliva up to croak: "Water. He's thirsty."

"The hell you—" Mr. McReuben said. He hardly raised his voice at all, but it carried over the bawling of the steers, the clanging of the locomotives and cars. "Mike! Water for this bull! Pecos, you get over to the station and

bring half a dozen bottles of beer. Cold, now. Rebel, bring the station agent here."

Jeff said: "Awwwwk—"

"It's all right, puncher. Say, that must be some bull. Couldn't you, even leave him long enough to get a boy to bring water?"

Jeff shook his head, still eying Big Red down. Five minutes more and it would be over. Take five minutes to find buckets for the bull, more than five minutes to walk to the station and back with the beer. But he could get a gulp of Big Red's water first. Only it seemed a shame to spoil a beautiful thirst on water, when that kid was bringing the beer.

It was much less than five minutes. One or two—say two. Two punchers in blue jeans and the flat hats they wore in California came through the rails with buckets in either hand. Big Red gave one final snort and shoved his white nose into the first bucket.

Jeff started to make a dive for a bucket himself, then stopped. Have to keep his dignity in front of these strangers. He turned away, suffering more than ever, but a man couldn't drink out of a stock bucket in the middle of town.

Silently he passed the rope to one of the men who had brought the water. Now that Big Red had been juiced, he'd be like a kitten—until he thought of something else he wanted.

Jeff took off his hat and walked to the rails, started to swing up beside Mr. McReuben.

A slim, bright-eyed kid with Spanish sideburns arrived at a dead run. He had three bottles of beer in each hand. He was so out of breath that he couldn't say anything; he just held the beer up to Mr. McReuben.

"Give them to the gent, Pecos."

Pecos held out a bottle of beer to Jeff.

Jeff reached for it, but Mr. McReuben said: "Just a minute. I forgot." He smiled. "Forgot to introduce you to Mr. Lawson Buckster, here. Our owner's grandson."

JEFF had continued to reach for the beer, for heaven in a brown glass bottle. But if Mr. McReuben wanted to play games, a minute or so didn't matter.

He bowed, both hands at his sides. He wished he could get up enough lubrication to say his own name, but he wasn't going to make the try and fail. A bow would have to do.

"Of course, of course," Mr. McReuben said. "This poor gentleman had a throat full of our good Los Angeles adobe several hours ago. Give him the beer, Pecos—"

Then Jeff had the bottle neck, cool and firm, between his lips. He finished the bottle in three gulps.

"Pardon my unseemly haste," he said. "That's right passable beer. I could use another, Mr. Buckster."

"Jes' call me Pecos," the boy said, staring beyond Jeff at the bull.

"My name is Decker—Jeff Decker. Won't you join me, Mr. McReuben?"

Mr. McReuben's brown face split into a grin as he accepted a bottle. They drank together. The first beer seemed to have been absorbed on touching Jeff's innards, but the second stayed intact for a moment, making a cold, comfortable ball in his stomach. Jeff pulled himself on the rails, and sighed. "That bull is all right so long's he gets what he wants when he wants it. Otherwise, he gets a mite annoyed."

"So I noticed," Mr. McReuben said, not seeming to notice the sly glance Pecos gave him as he reached for another bottle of beer.

"This isn't enough of a corral for a bull," Jeff said. "Big Red, there, would have been out and scaring Los Angeles in the time it would have taken me to get him a bucket. Hope you got a good tight yard for him on the ranch. He's liable to want to go home for awhile."

"Oh, yes. We have everything on the Buckster Ranch. Did you have much trouble in transit, Mr. Decker?"

Jeff started to answer when a drawling tenor voice said: "Pecos, you're too unfinished to start drinkin' beer and sich." A long arm snaked through the rails and plucked the bottle from the kid's hands. There was the noise of a swallow, and then: "Hyar's the freight fella, Mr. McReuben."

Behind him, an angry voice babbled: "I don't see any accident. If this is your idea of some sort of cowboy joke, I'll have you know that doesn't go in Los Angeles! I—"

"Now, Mister," the Southern voice drawled, "keep your shirt—a boiled one, ain't it?—on. Mebbe I did sort of hint—you might say—that something excitin' an' dramatic was occurring hyah in the yards, but my error was one of time, on account of if you hadn't come down here, there woulda been."

Jeff wanted to look around behind him, but Mr. McReuben sat drinking his beer as though the whole matter was beneath his notice, and Jeff was not going to show any unmannerly curiosity until the other man did.

The city man's voice had begun again. Mr. McReuben's incurious tones cut through: "Please come around in front of me. I can't see out of the back of my head."

The argument stopped. Then a fat, bulky figure in neat blue serge came through the rails. After him appeared a lean, towering man in gray clothes, with gray whiskers obscuring a face that must have been aged sixty years at least. A red hat-band was the only touch of color. "Well, I done like you said, Mr. McReuben. Hyar he stands."

The fat man cried: "Do you accept responsibility for this man?"

Mr. McReuben said: "Rebel, meet Don Jeff, here. Mr. Decker, Captain Lee Beecham, usually Rebel. . . . I'm sorry I forgot about Pecos not getting beer, Rebel." Then: "Are you the agent for this railroad?"

"I am. I am the city freight-agent, sir, and I can assure you—"

Mr. McReuben drank gently from his bottle. "Mr. Decker, here, brought in a bull this morning. That bull over there. You knew this bull was for the Buckster Ranch?"

"I have complete charge of all shipments received over this line for the entire growing community of Los Angeles. If you have any complaints, I can assure you, sir—"

"Mr. McReuben—my name is Mr. McReuben."

The fat agent blinked, his flow of oratory cut off and shoved back down his throat for the moment. "Oh? Oh, yes, of course. Well, Mr. Mc-

Reuben, if you will come to my office, my secretary will furnish you with the proper blanks to fill out, and any complaint you may wish to make will be filed there. In due course, and through the proper channels, the employee responsible for any error—if there has been an error—will be found, and the responsibility fixed. . . . And now, if you will excuse me, I have a hundred and one—"

"Did you know this bull was assigned to the Buckster Ranch?"

The fat mouth opened and shut twice, but this time no flow of oratory issued forth. The railroad official blinked in the sun's glare. "No, I didn't. I do not, of course, handle each waybill personally. What is the complaint?"

"Ah," said Mr. McReuben. "Why, the bull was left without water, and Mr. Decker was left without assistance, until I arrived. However, all that is in the past. I just wanted to make sure that, in the future, you would be on the alert for any further shipments addressed to the Buckster Ranch."

"Yes," said the freight agent. "Yes, of course."

"There's only one more thing," said Mr. McReuben. "We brought a freight-car up from Santa Monica to take the bull home in. Get it over here. There are some steers in it."

Another speech was born. "That is not on our railroad, Mr. McReuben. I don't see how we could—" The speech died. "I'll have that car here in half an hour."

"Good," said Mr. McReuben wearily. "That's just fine. —Rebel, you go along with the gentleman and help him if he needs it."

THE railroad man and the Southerner slipped through the corral bars and were gone. Mr. McReuben opened his eyes again, and sat contemplating Big Red, the dusty corral, and Pecos, the boy, who still held two bottles of beer.

Jeff wondered where the other bottle had come from. Maybe the hip-pocket of his jeans.

"We might as well finish that beer, Mr. Decker."

"Yes sir. Yes, Mr. McReuben."

Mr. McReuben chuckled. "Mr. Decker, I am not so bad as I might seem. Do you read books?"

"Some."

"I thought perhaps you did. A certain cast of the features. . . . One of the drawbacks, Mr. Decker, of the cattle business is that it is so hard to find suitable associates to discuss the arts with. . . . But I digress," said Mr. McReuben. "What I started to say was, Frank Norris's book, 'The Octopus,' makes it plain that every Californian must regard every railroad-

man as his natural enemy. You have read 'The Octopus?'"

"Yes."

"A fine book. Perhaps not as well written as 'The Pit.' Norris' untimely death was California's loss. This is a great State, Mr. Decker. You plan to stay long?"

Jeff searched for the meaning behind the question, decided there was none. It was most unlikely that Mr. McReuben had heard of Jeff Decker. "I thought I might settle here. I've got mighty sick of the sagebrush country." *Where every gunman on the prod, and every ambitious youth, was out to make a name for himself by facing Jeff Decker's guns.*

"Been there all your life?"

"Born near Van Horn, Texas. My dad moved there for his health. But I've been down on the Gulf some, round Galveston—"

And up North—and a procession of angry, sneering or excited men passing under his guns. All fair fights, and almost every duel creating the need for the next one. A brother who had to have his revenge, or a partner— Jeff broke off the train of thought and forced himself to smile. "I like the water," he said. "Maybe that's silly, seein' that I don't know anything but horses and cattle."

"Oh, no," said Mr. McReuben. "No. There is a destiny that shapes our ends— Now, Mr. Decker, you take the Buckster Ranch. We've got twenty-two miles of the best beach in the world. We run right down to the sea. But we run back, too, into the Santa Monica Mountains. It is heaven on earth for the cattleman, Mr. Decker. Good range, good grass, plenty of dust to make you appreciate a dip in the Pacific come eventide. 'The herd at evening—' and so forth. Perhaps you might consider working for us, Mr. Decker. I think I like you."

A FREIGHT-CAR, its side painted: "BUCKSTER RANCH, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA," came clanging down the tracks ahead of a switch engine. The City Freight Agent, his nice suit dusty and soiled, was operating the hand brake on the car, while Rebel sat on the roof, chewing tobacco and combing his whiskers with his fingers.

The freight agent stopped the car, signaled the locomotive, and said: "Here it is, Mr. McReuben." His hands shook a little on the brake handle.

"I'm glad you think you like me," Jeff Decker said. "Plumb glad, Mr. McReuben. I would hate for it to be any other way."

Mr. McReuben smiled a little.

"If your boys will just bring those steers up where Big Red can see them,

he'll load easy. He's a sociable fellow."

"So am I," said Mr. McReuben.

Chapter Two

SANTA MONICA was a pretty little white-and-green city that looked something like Cuba. A stock corral had been built at the end of one of its macadam streets, overlooking the white beach, and there was no trouble about unloading the cattle.

Mr. McReuben said: "How long do you think your friend there ought to rest before we drive him home, Mr. Decker?"

"How many days' walk is it?"

Mr. McReuben said: "Why, about two hours. Maybe a little more, considering the bull may be stiff."

"Oh, just give him time to make friends with the steers, say a half an hour," Jeff said. He looked around him at the expensive houses, the beautiful lawns, the automobiles and hackney pairs. "Never saw cattleland that close to a city like this."

"That's Californy, Jeff," Rebel said. "We got ever'thing every other place in the world has, only better. From palms to pines, from velvet lawns to primitive Injuns, from—"

"Rebel's been playin' up to an ol' rich lady's got some real estate that's boom-in'," Pecos said. "He done got a new hat, an'—"

Rebel's long arm caught the boy.

"Mr. McReuben!" Pecos protested.

"You said," Mr. McReuben chided: "'He done got a new hat.'"

"He has got a new hat," Pecos said. "But Rebel says—"

"Rebel is not the heir to the Buckster Ranch." Mr. McReuben turned to the two punchers who rode behind. "Red, you and Mike watch the corral. Pecos, go get the horses from the livery stable. Jeff, you and I and Rebel might just as well go have a drink."

While Jeff put another bottle of beer away, and Rebel and Mr. McReuben absorbed a pair of whisky toddies each, Jeff played with a happy thought. Mr. McReuben had offered him a job! And that talk about books meant it was something better than just a riding job. Maybe this was a chance to start again, to forget about the guns, leave them packed in his war-bags—a chance to use some of the things he'd learned in school.

There had been no chance in Texas. Texas cattlemen didn't want to know about the new African grasses that increased a range's usefulness by incredible amounts, a hundred, two hundred per cent. They didn't care about scientific breeding or hay storage. They wanted to know if you

could rope, tie, brand, and use a gun on occasion. Anything else was stuff and nonsense. A cow was a cow, and a hand was someone named Slim who rode a horse. . . .

"You have many neighbors?" Jeff asked.

Mr. McReuben said: "We're about the last of the big cattle outfits this side of Ventura. The Rancho La Brea's a railroad yard now, and the Van Nuys is a big wheat-field."

"Bunch of fool hoemen," Rebel grumbled. "Like them nesters behind us."

"Government quarter-sections?" Jeff asked.

"Yes," Mr. McReuben said. "I've let them put a road through the Buckster Ranch. The Government would have let the fools homestead in a spot they couldn't even get in or out of."

Jeff caught his breath. "Texas, New Mexico, Arizona have dipped themselves in blood, fighting the sagebrushers. Glad to see you're leaving them alone."

"They'll starve out soon enough by themselves. I'm a peaceable man." Horses' hoofs clattered in the street. "There's Pecos. Drink up, gentlemen." They went out into the neat, sun-drenched street. Pecos rode a lean high bay, and Rebel vaulted to the saddle of a Kentucky black. Mr. McReuben took over a huge sorrel gelding with a flaxen mane and tail.

"The palomino is for you," Mr. McReuben said. "She was bred on the Buckster Ranch."

Jeff Decker put a hand on the low-backed, thick-horned Mexican saddle. A hundred dollars' worth of silver decorated it, and its pale tan pigskin covering was new.

"The first time you're not using your saddle," Mr. McReuben said, swinging up on the sorrel, "I'll have your name engraved on the cantle-plate."

Jeff Decker swallowed. "You Californians sure do things in style. You do this for every visitor?"

MR. McREUBEN waved his quirt, made the sorrel do a figure eight. He looked smaller, tougher than ever on the big horse. "The Buckster Ranch has its standards," he said. "But you're not a visitor. You're going to work for us." There was neither invitation nor command in his voice; just the mild, calm acceptance of a man who had always got his way.

Jeff Decker was measuring the stirrup leathers of his new saddle, replacing them. "Be ready in a minute," he said.

A saddle like that cost more than a man could make in a year of honest work. The pay would be good on a ranch that gave away presents like

that. A man ought to be able to save enough in a couple of years to start his own spread. But it wasn't that. It wasn't money. If a man was money-minded, he'd not go to be a cowhand in the first place. He'd go to the East and look up some of the dudes he'd known in the Rough Riders. *When I left Texas, Jeff thought, I swore I'd homestead me some land and never hire out again where I might have to use a gun, but this is different.*

Jeff lifted the reins, and the palomino brought her hind legs sharply under her, went to the end of the street at a smart lope. Her coat was the color of ripe wheat, her mane and tail pale as the new moon, and her lope as smooth as a rocking chair.

The mare came to rest with her nose almost touching an ornamental iron railing. On the other side there was a little narrow park, with green lawns and palm trees like they had in Havana, and girls strolling with their men. Children played, and under the mare's feet were the tracks of the electric cars. Then, beyond the park, the ground fell away in a steep bluff, and Jeff Decker saw, for the first time, the Pacific Ocean. Texas and the cow business were far away—a thousand miles away. But back of him, in a stock corral built on the macadam road was Big Red, the bull he had brought all the way from his cousin's ranch near Van Horn.

The dazzle of sun on the ocean hurt his eyes. A ranch with twenty-two miles of beach! Maybe the beer had been too much for his empty stomach.

The mare moved suggestively under his knees, the silver on his saddle caught the sun. He slapped the golden neck lightly with the reins, and the mare turned on her hind legs and loped back to the corral.

"I'm working for you, Mr. McReuben," he said.

MR. MCREUBEN's eyes were even with his; the red was taller than the palomino. "All right, Jeff," he said. "You start at a hundred a month. We'll figure out what you do later. . . . You got a gun in your blanket roll?"

Jeff nodded. "Yes sir. But you might as well know now: I'm better with grass and stock than I am with guns."

Now that he'd said it, he felt better.

Mr. McReuben's thin lips twisted into a smile that, after a moment, included his blue eyes. "Why, Jeff," he said mildly, "I've got Rebel there for that sort of thing. What would I need two gunmen for? I'm hiring you to tell us some of the latest Texas methods of cow-culture."

He reined his sorrel around, and cantered up the hard street. Jeff rode at his side, and the horses of

Pecos and Rebel clattered in their rear. All around them, Jeff saw the carryalls and brake carts and automobiles of the swankiest beach town on the Pacific Coast; but he noticed traffic made way for the four cowmen.

Chapter Three

THE road died on them before they had gone two miles out of town. Until then they had company, gentlemen trying their trotting horses, swells driving their automobiles, people bathing in the rough-looking surf.

Then there was no road, but only the beach, and no land either; the mountains rose sheer from the sand.

After an hour or so, the mountains moved back ahead of them, and they came to the white gate and the barbed-wire fence that marked the beginning of the Buckster Ranch. Pretty country, smooth green now in May, and dotted with parklike live oaks. There were California orange poppies and an occasional madrone with its red bark and blue-green leaves.

Approaching the gate, they saw the group of riders waiting for them.

"Brownie," Pecos said.

"Now, son," Rebel protested. "Sho that's Brownie. But whar's your eyesight? One of them hosses is a pinto, and the Buckster Ranch don't own any pintos. We got company, Pecos, and mind you watch yore mannehs, now."

"Someone to see me," Mr. McReuben said, idly. "I guess Brownie told 'em I was in town, and they could wait for me to get back."

Jeff was looking up the slopes. Red cattle with the blotchy white marks of Hereford grades were visible along the hills. Time they were sending for good bulls like Big Red. There was dairy blood, and worse, in that cattle.

Pecos had ridden ahead to open the gate. His shrill whoop came back. "It's a girl!"

Mr. McReuben chuckled. "There go his manners, Rebel. Guess it's the visiting nurse for the homestead settlement."

"Fool hoe-men need a nurse," Rebel grunted. But, unconsciously, all three men were hurrying their horses to meet the strange lady; though they had just left a town full of women, there was always something exciting about a girl out on the range itself.

And then—Jeff saw the girl, a wonderful girl, and with her were four men. Two of them were certainly not cattlemen. The horses they rode would have looked better pulling a plow, and they sat those horses as though they were made of wood.

One of the other two was unmistakably a cowboy. Put him in sailor

pants or a Prince Albert coat, he'd still be a cowboy. The other, the larger, was harder to pin down. At first glance he looked like nothing more than a beefy cowhand. Strong, lazy—maybe a bunkhouse bully.

Jeff, having glanced at the man, found himself looking again. There was something that didn't add up.

It was, Jeff decided, the gloves—expensive, immaculate pigskin. Many riders wore gloves, of course, but these were the best Jeff had seen.

The big man, becoming aware of Jeff's appraisal, returned the stare with shrewd black eyes. Jeff smiled, pleasantly, he hoped, and looked the other way. When the man spoke, his voice came out in the nasal twang of the Territory cowhand. He seemed to belong right where he was, sitting a horse on another man's ranch, working for beef and beans.

"He'll tell you," the big man drawled. "This yere's Mr. McReuben, now."

Mr. McReuben removed his hat with a flourish, but the girl rode forward, held out her hand to Jeff. It was a mistake; but the profit, Jeff felt, was his. He took the hand—held it.

"Mr. McReuben, these men here—" She was looking at her captured hand in some astonishment.

"I'm Mr. McReuben." The segundo pushed his horse in; the nurse got her hand back, gave Jeff a furious look, and turned to the little man. She did not offer to shake hands with him.

"Oh. Oh. Well—these men were going to shoot Harvey Smith and Al, here. For nothing. For—" She broke off to watch the byplay between Harvey Smith and Jeff.

HARVEY SMITH's sunburned face was fiery with anger. He had not taken his eyes from Jeff's face since Jeff had captured the hand.

Jeff looked back at him, smiling amiably.

The heavy-set man said: "They was fishin' down on the beach, Mr. McReuben. Our orders was, the squatters was not to stop on the road, nor get off it. I warned 'em to leave the ranch, an' they got fresh."

The young farmer named Harvey said: "The Buckster Ranch doesn't own the fish in the ocean. Think we're gonna steal your beach?"

Harvey's friend Al added: "An' we're not squatters. But we know where we ain't wanted. 'Harv,' I said 'we shoul'da moved on down.'"

The nurse said: "Yes, they were willing to go. Perhaps it's my fault, but they were a mile up the beach, toward the wagon road, and I didn't see why they should have the extra ride. Their horses are tired, they've been plowing. So I told this man

here"—she pointed at Brownie—"to leave them alone, and he pulled his gun, and forced them down here—" She was close to tears, but not tears of despair; she was just plain angry. Jeff sat back in his saddle, and was glad he was not Mr. McReuben.

Mr. McReuben said: "Brownie, I'm surprised at you."

The girl said: "You see, boys, it will be all right. Go back and get your fish, and—"

"I'm surprised at you for having to pull a gun to handle nesters. Maybe it's because you haven't been getting enough sleep. Maybe you'll do better in the future, now that I've hired Jeff Decker here to be segundo when I'm away in the daytime. You can go back to being night boss."

ONE of the gunman's gloved hands kneaded the other. He flushed, then his eyes dropped. "Yes, Mr. McReuben."

"Go on with what you were doing, Brownie."

Brownie gave Jeff a long look, and rode off, the other cowboy following him silently.

Mr. McReuben bowed to the girl. "Now, Miss—"

"Harriott. I'm the district nurse."

"Yes. Miss Harriott. You have to understand, my men have their orders. A ranch is a complicated thing; we have to consult attorneys before we make any concessions. I gave the order on our lawyer's advice; you see, we didn't want the beach becoming public property."

"Yes. But—guns—"

"Well, Miss Harriott, now, a cowboy is just a cowboy. I'm afraid you won't find young men from Harvard College riding our range. But we'll pass over that. You boys keep what fish you've caught, and in the future, get across our line before you camp. Won't you ride up with us, Miss Harriott?"

The man named Harvey said, "Fish're all tromped into the sand," but Mr. McReuben had started his horse up in such a way that the pinto was forced to go along.

"You'd better come up to the house with us, Miss Harriott," said Mr. McReuben. "Mrs. Buckster's been wanting to meet you. You'll stay for dinner. If I didn't have you for dinner, now, I'll bet I couldn't get Jeff here to stop off at his house and get settled 'fore nightfall."

Jeff looked back at Harvey Smith. The man was staring after them, his head motionless. Jeff frowned, then shrugged and looked back at the girl. He wondered why he had never thought before that pale cream skin, black eyes and blonde hair looked best when the lady was blushing. And she was sure doing that. He went to



That pull had to be gentle. Big Red had once killed a man who had pulled too hard on his nose.

her rescue: "What kind of graze do you have in here mostly, Mr. McReuben?"

"Mostly wild oats," said Mr. McReuben. "There's burr-clover and filaree, but the wild oats choke them off pretty much. Still and all, I don't see why the quality of the grass should make you red in the face. —He is pretty red, isn't he, Miss Harriott?"

"No more so than the lady herself," Rebel cut in.

Miss Harriott looked as if she didn't know whether to laugh, cry or get mad.

"This is your house," Mr. McReuben said. They reined in in front of a little two-room stucco bungalow, with a tiny porch and a corral and stall behind. "All right?"

"Sure," said Jeff. He was still looking at the girl on the pinto.

"Anything you need?" Mr. McReuben insisted.

Jeff hadn't looked inside the house. "If it's got a bed, a desk and a filing case, that'll do," Jeff said.

"Desk? Filing case?" Mr. McReuben looked astonished. "You one of these college-trained ranchers?"

Jeff came out of the clouds. This was the point at which he'd been stopped in all the previous cases where he'd hung up his guns and tried to be a foreman. "Why, yes, in a way."

"Well, fine," said Mr. McReuben. "Rebel, you take care of that. Come on, Miss Harriott." He and the girl went off up the hill.

Rebel spat. "I'll git 'em for ye," he said, combing his whiskers. "Don

Jeff, I'll furnish you with a desk and two filin' cases if you want 'em. But wait'll Brownie hears about it."

"Brownie?"

"Ain't love wonderful?" Rebel marveled. "Brownie's that 'big ol' gun-totin' Oklahoman that's already sore at you on account of he thinks you're after his job."

"Oh, is he?"

"C'mon, Pecos. Let's beat it!"

Chapter Four

TWO hours later Jeff had finished bathing, had put on a white shirt and the pants to his best city suit, when he heard someone call his name.

Wheels creaked and horses' hoofs came spanking down the hill. Jeff turned his head lazily. A Mexican boy driving a buckboard reined sharply in in front of Jeff's house and saluted with a whip. "Señor Decker?"

Jeff did not rise. "Yeah."

"Your bag, it is here. In the back. He arrives *per expreso* the two days gone. Also one desk plus one filing case, all complete, per orders Mr. McReuben."

Jeff started to rise, then checked himself. This was important. He had been promoted from cowhand to a sort of second-segundo—for no reason he could think of—and he had to live up to it. "All right," he drawled. "Tote it in."

The mestizo stared a moment. Then he lowered the whip, sighed.

Dexterously he cramped the buckboard around until he could tie the near horse's head to the hitching rail in front of the house. He carried the big canvas sack into the bedroom, unloaded the furniture. "The Mrs. Buckster, she will see you at seex by the clock," he said.

It was now about half-past five. "All right, boy, thanks." Jeff fished in his pocket, encountered a two-bit piece, and tossed it to the Mexican.

"Gracias, Don Jeff," the boy said, and whistling gayly, untied his team and went around the curve. Jeff heard him shout: "Hey, Tex, I got some stuff for you."

Jeff finished dressing, whistling, and started out.

THE palomino mare was in the little corral behind his house, but saddling and riding would mess up his city suit. Jeff went to the corral and patted the mare, then followed the rising road.

A large and expensive spread: He passed the bunkhouse, a kitchen and a mess-hall, and looking in he could see the hands at supper. Bright kerosene lamps swung overhead, and a phonograph was playing.

The men at the table all looked like Americans. Must be another bunkhouse some place for the Mexes.

Jeff, you have certainly signed on with an outfit.

The road was dusty, and it climbed pretty steadily. He was no more used to walking than any other cow-poke, and the high white collar cut into his windpipe. So, a quarter of a mile past the bunkhouse, he was somewhat out of breath when a man on a *grulla* gelding rode out from behind some manzanita bushes, and quietly edged his horse across the road.

The sun was still high enough up here for Jeff to see like day. This was just a cowhand in levis and a felt hat. But his saddle carried a .30-30 rifle and a fine pair of field glasses.

The rider said, easily: "I'm afraid you've lost your road, Mister. Now, you just turn around and head back down hill. Sooner or later you come to a fence, and—"

Jeff put a hand on the saddle-horn. "I'm on my way up to the big house to see Mrs. Buckster."

A spur flashed, and the *grulla* stepped sidewise just enough to remove Jeff's hand. "Sorry, Mister. You'll have to put it in a letter."

Reins were ready to drop around the steel horn, right hand was going for the rope, left hand ready to unscabbard the rifle. Not in Jeff's mature time had armed cowboys ridden the Texas ranches. Not the peaceful ranches. This was the way you posted a guard on an outlaw hideaway.

"Mrs. Buckster wants to see me," Jeff said, "at six."

"Move on, dude," the hand said. The menace was not yet there in his voice, but the rope was loose now, ready to flip and pin Jeff's arms to his sides. It would not be pleasant to be dragged the mile or more to the front gate.

Jeff said: "Let that rope go, cowboy. I'm Mr. Decker. I work here."

"Dude, you're crazy," the cowboy said. "Plumb loco, like they say."

"All right, son," Jeff told him. "Mr. McReuben hired me on today. I'm using the little house the other side of your bunkhouse."

"You're not a cattleman," the rider chuckled, "not in that collar. Railroad shyster, ain't you? And me, I'm—"

Jeff made his play. He was standing on the near side of the puncher's left knee. His right hand knife-edged down on the line below the point, and involuntarily the toe flipped up. The pony, obedient to the signal of a lifetime, whirled around. As the far shoulder came up to Jeff's hand, he corraled the lariat. He didn't have time to build a loop, or to get a proper grip, but pinching the honda, he flung away.

A loop over the horn, and the horse pulled the rope steady, pinning the rider's arms down as he had intended to do Jeff's.

Jeff said: "Who's no cattleman, puncher? I tell you I'm Don Jeff."

The rider's face was a dull and unhealthy scarlet. He said: "Mister, this ain't takin' you far. If I yell, there'll be a dozen boys here."

"Sure. And the Rebel and Mr. McReuben'll be leading them, which will make it fair enough. All I wanted was for you to yell, and not just drag me to the gate."

"I don't work under them," Marks said. He bent his head over the off side of the horse, seemed to be having trouble recoiling his rope just the way he wanted it. "I'm under Brownie. Us riders don't have much to do with Mr. McReuben direct."

Jeff put a hand on the saddle-horn again. The rider made no attempt to move his horse away. "That's a Bob Crosby tree, isn't it?" Jeff asked. "We don't see many of them in Texas."

... Why, then, we won't mention this to anybody. But for the tally, you knew who I was, didn't you?"

The guard still avoided his eyes. "You want to try this saddle sometime," he said. "Yessir, a good ol' Bob Crosby'll outsit any of them high-backed Texas rigs. This one's my own, I brought it with me. See, I got me a silver name-plate and two pair conchas. Nex' time I get me a li'l' cash, I'm gonna fix her with a silver edgin', like's on the rig you got

on that Mexican saddle on your palomino."

Jeff grinned, his question answered. "What's your name?" Then— "No, just to call you by. There'll be no report."

"They call me Slim."

Jeff said: "We're all Slim or Tex when we hire out."

"D. J. Marks, of East Tennessee. Jes' an old hillbilly."

"It's not so flat where I come from. D. J., is this ranch patrolled this way every night, or just when this Brownie feels mean?"

"Well suh, Don Jeff, with nesters behind you, you have to watch out. I never knew a nester wouldn't eat fresh beef sooner or later, did you?"

Jeff shook his head. "It was that way in Texas, but I hoped— Nesters would be all right if they ever pre-empted land that would support them."

"All that kind of land's gone. Wouldn't be free if it was worth anythin', I always figgered. This Harvey Smith says he's got as good land as any farm in the country, but I don't know."

"Who's he?"

"The one Brownie woulda run off today if you-all hadn't come along. Sort of a leader amongst the nesters, kinda trouble-maker. Don Jeff, you better go on. The house is just over that rise. You better go on—Mrs. Buckster don't like folks to be late."

Jeff nodded. "Be seein' you, D. J." He walked on. Behind him the sunset flared and shimmered and waned. He went on and topped the rise.

Below him was the finest house he had ever dreamed of. Perhaps thirty or forty rooms.

JEFF shook his head and went on down the hill, slowly. He stopped on the fine doorstep, big as the living-room at home, and wiped his shoes with his handkerchief, straightened his clothes. Then he looked around for some kind of bell to ring.

While he was still looking, the door opened, and a Mexican in Spanish clothes—black short jacket, tight trousers, sash and gold braid—opened the heavy door. "Señor Decker?"

Jeff nodded. He handed his hat and gauntlets to the servant; he was rewarded with another bow.

"You are expected. Mrs. Buckster, she is in the library."

Walking down the marble hall, admiring the heavy Chinese-looking furniture, the rugs on the walls as well as on the floor, Jeff was not too dazed to notice that this Mexican, like the other, had called the owner Mrs. Buckster, not Señora. A point.

The servant had stopped at a door that was almost drooping with carvings—lions' heads, and bunches of

grapes, and wreaths of flowers, cut out of the dark wood. He opened the door, and bowed. "Señor Decker," he said.

Jeff walked in.

Chapter Five

THERE was more of that Chinese carving in the library. Books stretched around the walls, red leather and blue leather making a background for fine gold print. Take a couple of double eagles beaten up just to letter the backs of those books.

At the big carved desk there sat a lady with her back to him. Her back was as straight as a board, in a dress all dull black. At the neck there was a black velvet ribbon. Iron-gray hair was piled up in a pompadour. She must have heard the servant, but you wouldn't have known it. The steel pen went on scratching on paper. Jeff wondered how she could read what she was writing without bending over a little.

He stood there. The pen scratched on, the straight back did not turn, and he began to fidget. He could feel himself getting red under his collar, the blush spreading up to his face.

Ah, this was the Buckster way. Start every conversation with the other person feeling ill at ease and white trashy, so's you could gain an advantage later, if it came out you wanted an advantage. Fine bunch of high riders!

Jeff, without letting the amusement he felt get into his voice, said: "Go on and finish your letter, ma'am. I can make myself at home with one of these fine books."

He had the pleasure of hearing the pen stop scratching for a moment. But just for a moment; outside of that, Mrs. Buckster gave no sign she had heard him.

Jeff ran a finger along the shelves. This man Dickens, now, he had been well-spoken of whenever Jeff ran into a reading man; and here was a book all about his trip to America. Jeff seated himself in a stiff, uncomfortable chair, and opened the stiff piece of reading matter.

The pages were still stuck together; the book had never been read before. Jeff half rose, to put it back on the shelf; then he sat back again. Books were meant to be read, weren't they? He got his knife out of his pocket, unclasped it and slit the first group of pages carefully. It was the first time in his life he had ever done a thing like that; he was glad to see that it was easy to do.

He began to read.

He had covered the first three pages when the pen stopped scratching, and

he heard the heavy desk chair creak a little on the tiled floor. But he went on reading, as though absorbed.

Mrs. Buckster said: "Well, young man."

Jeff promptly rose, put the book back on its shelf, and bowed. "Good evening to you, ma'am."

"Young man, my name is not ma'am or 'señora' or 'lady'. It is Mrs. Buckster."

"Yes, Mrs. Buckster. I'm Jefferson Decker. Mr. McReuben hired me today."

"All right, young man. You may have a chair." But that was not as effective as it might have been, considering that he had already had a chair.

Jeff sat down.

"I must say," Mrs. Buckster commented, "that you don't look as I expected you to. Mr. McReuben said you were a college man."

"Well, Mrs. Buckster, I'm not exactly a college man. I had a couple of years at Texas Agricultural. I didn't get clear through."

"Failure?" Mrs. Buckster frowned.

"More like an inconvenience," Jeff explained. "There was a little bit of trouble—guns and such. I figured I'd better go North. After that I drifted around a little, and a few years went by, an' by the time I got back to my cousin's ranch, the nesters had shrunk it considerable."

"I see."

"But frankly, Mrs. Buckster, college isn't the help you'd think. The old-time cattlemen, they don't want to know what the books say about fattening a cow. I've been just working out as a hand around Texas and New Mexico. When my cousin wrote and asked me did I want to take Big Red to California for him, it came as a relief. I got pretty weary of making my living with g— with a rope and a branding-iron."

"Oh, the BD Ranch belongs to your cousin? They raise good stock."

"I thank you, ma'—Mrs. Buckster. The D stands for Decker. It's a ranch my father and my uncle started back in the '70's."

Mrs. Buckster said: "Where was your father from?"

"Washington, Illinois—that's East St. Louis."

"Yes, I know. I'm from Chicago, and my name was Decker, too. We might be kin."

"I would admire to think so, ma'am. I mean, Mrs. Buckster."

Mrs. Buckster said: "Do you drink, Decker?"

The abrupt change of topic startled him. He considered for a moment saying he didn't. Then he shrugged that away. This was a good job and an interesting job, and maybe his first real chance to get ahead and use the

things he knew. But still and all, he was not going to change himself all over just to hold it. And if he said he didn't drink, and she found out later he did, it would be plumb embarrassing.

"Of course, Mrs. Buckster. I'm a cowboy."

She smiled a little for the first time. Her hand reached to the wall, and she pulled an embroidered length of cloth hanging there.

The bell was still echoing a little outside when the Mexican opened the door. "The sherry decanter and two glasses, Pedro," the lady said.

Jeff heaved a sigh. Well, that had turned out all right. For a second he'd been afraid she was ringing to have him thrown out.

Pedro came scurrying back with a cut-glass bottle and two glasses on a silver tray. Mrs. Buckster said: "All right. I'll pour." She filled a glass and held it out to Jeff.

As he took his seat again, she held up her own glass. The electric light caught the bright brown wine, and made it sparkle. "This isn't any of this California sherry," she said. "Mr. Buckster had it imported especially from Spain." They drank.

"That's as good sherry wine as I ever tasted, Mrs. Buckster," Jeff said. He was trying to remember if he had ever tasted sherry wine before. "They have good wine in Cuba, but not like this."

He'd gone too far, the smile did not come this time. Mrs. Buckster said: "It is not suitable for the owner of the Buckster Ranch to associate socially with cowboys, but since you are my cousin, I shall expect you to eat dinner with Lawson, Mr. McReuben and me each evening. . . . I shall also expect you to assist Rebel—Captain Beecham—in educating Lawson. It is time he learned things. I am an old woman, Decker—"

"Now, ma'am—"

"Please. I loathe that Southwestern 'ma'am' and I trust that a woman of seventy is above flattery. I was saying, I am an old woman but, I believe, competent to run this ranch until my grandson comes of age. The more he knows, the better he will do it. Though it is not difficult." Mrs. Buckster put her hand on a pile of papers. "The plans are all here."

"Ma— The plans, Mrs. Buckster?"

"The plans that Mr. Buckster completed in 1890, just before he died. What he wanted the ranch to be. We had a setback when my son George got a foolish patriotic notion, and died in the war of '98. Lawson's mother, of course, died when he was born. . . . I shall raise Lawson to take the place his father should have taken had he known his true duty.



The smile did not come this time.

He was not needed in that war. Lawson—or Pecos as the men on the ranch all call him—has never been to school. I have taught him. You will help.”

“Yes, Mrs. Buckster.”

Then she smiled. “And of course you will also—will you escort me to dinner?—get the chance to try out your agricultural education. I’m interested in that.”

Jeff escorted her to a huge dining-room, where Miss Harriott, Mr. McReuben and Pecos waited.

“Good evening,” said Mrs. Buckster. “Yes, Miss Harriott is quite as pretty as you said, Mr. McReuben—I was just telling Decker, here, what a problem it is to run a ranch like this. I don’t see how you can stand to work with those awful nesters. But with Mr. McReuben’s help, I have managed to hire the sort of ruffians who can deal with such people as they deserve to be dealt with. You may sit down, gentlemen.”

Not seeming to notice Miss Harriott’s indignant, startled face, Mrs. Buckster sat down.

Chapter Six

IT was Mr. Buckster’s plan,” Mrs. Buckster said, “eventually to have some sort of dormitory or guest village on the Buckster Ranch where people important in the arts and sciences could stay, and in exchange for their

maintenance, provide suitable conversation at dinner. Unfortunately, the whole plan, as laid down by Mr. Buckster when we bought this land in the late ’70’s, has been delayed a bit; many of the things that should have been done in 1905 will not be finished until next year.”

She was not talking to Jeff, who sat between Pecos and Mr. McReuben, but to Miss Harriott, who was opposite him. Miss Harriott said: “Yes, yes, I suppose the big difficulty in living on a ranch is the fear of becoming insular. But then, this close to town, to Santa Monica—”

“I never go in to town. I never leave the Buckster Ranch. But then, of course, it doesn’t matter so much about me. I am an old woman; my life is lived. But my grandson here, Lawson, must be educated to his position in life. I consider the Santa Monica schools directly responsible for his father’s death, and therefore quite out of the question for Lawson.” She smiled at Pecos, sitting next to Jeff.

Jeff turned to grin at the boy, in case Pecos was feeling the kind of embarrassment Jeff himself would have felt at being talked over that way. But Pecos was buttering bread and eating it.

Then Jeff turned quickly to look at Miss Harriott as she said: “Your son—”

“My son,” said Mrs. Buckster, “was filled with a lot of fool notions in school about dying for his country.

If it had not been for that, he would never have enlisted, never gotten dysentery in Cuba, never—” She broke off, smiling serenely. “That is in the past. The thing is, I have worried about Pecos, as he likes to be called. With you here, Cousin Jeff—”

Pedro, bringing in dishes of crab and rice, nearly dropped them. Mr. McReuben’s butter knife clattered against his plate.

“Cousin Jeff?” he asked. “She mean you?”

“My first name is Jefferson,” Jeff Decker said.

“Well, now,” said Mr. McReuben evenly, “I didn’t know that, Decker. I might have suspected, though, when Mrs. Buckster said the man who came with the bull might make another hand.” He played with a red ribbon in the lapel of his coat.

“I’m not sure that Jeff knew it himself,” Mrs. Buckster said calmly. “But didn’t you think it peculiar, Mr. McReuben, that I insisted on that one particular bull, when I so seldom have anything to do with the cattle end of the Buckster Ranch? But remember, I left the hiring up to you.”

“Well, I knew a good man when I saw him,” Mr. McReuben said.

Jeff had the uneasy feeling that there was a fight going on under all this, and that he had something to do with it. He would write to his cousin Lorn Baker, back in Van Horn, and find out just how and when the Bucksters knew that he was going to bring Big Red out. He hadn’t known it himself till he got that note from Lorn three days before the trains were going to leave. A favor, Lorn had said. It would be interesting to know if his gun-fighting reputation had anything to do with Mrs. Buckster’s little plan. If it had, he’d soon be out of a job. Jeff Decker was through with guns.

Miss Harriott said: “I think this is very exciting. Do you feel as if you’d come home, Mr. Decker?”

“No,” Jeff said. “Not home.” Only this afternoon he’d had a lot of misgivings about hiring on with this high-riding outfit. Mr. McReuben had thrown an easy rope over his neck, like you pull down a wild horse; Mrs. Buckster had put on the pigging strings, and it was only a matter of time—when they were ready—before the Buckster Ranch brand was slapped on his flank. “To tell you the truth, ma’am, I don’t feel anything except I’ve got a job as second-segundo with a good outfit, and that I’m eatin’ food we didn’t see in Texas.”

Miss Harriott took it up. “That’s the wonderful thing about California. You can hardly starve, can you? I’ve organized parties of my homesteaders to come down fishing. Variety in diet—”

She broke off, and flushed.

Mr. McReuben said: "Don't let that trouble today worry you, Miss Harriott. I'll write to Mr. Harrison, our lawyer, tonight, and see what your people can do about fishing on our beach without jeopardizing the Buckster Ranch rights. Believe me, Miss Harriott, land titles are peculiar things."

Pecos said: "Brownie was tellin' Rebel as how he was just waitin' fer the squatters to start killing Buckster beef. He said—"

Mr. McReuben said: "You forget that Miss Harriott is a friend of the nesters, Pecos. Courtesy to a guest, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," Miss Harriott said. "This isn't the first homestead I've nursed. I was up in Montana. It's pretty hard to ask a man to starve his children when rich men are running thousands of cattle all around him. But you don't have to worry, Mr. McReuben. Up on the ridge, the farm agent and I are making each four families set aside the forty acres in the middle of their section, so that there'll be a quarter-section left for common grazeland. That's the way New England was built, you know. All the parks that are called Commons in New England used to be community cattle land."

"A quarter section of that ridge land will support four beef cows," Mr. McReuben said, "—with luck."

Miss Harriott said: "Well, we'll work it out. But you don't have to worry about my people being thieves."

"I'm not worried," Mr. McReuben said. "If I was, I'd close the road I let them put through the Buckster Ranch."

THE meal ended on that. Mrs. Buckster rose and swept out of the room, smiling. Mr. McReuben said: "After dinner, Mrs. Buckster and I usually devote an hour to correspondence. Jeff, why don't you take Miss Harriott for a walk?"

Pecos said, "I gotta go see Rebel about somethin'," and faded from sight, and Jeff was left alone with Miss Harriott. He felt, suddenly, a little awkward. "I hear it gets cold of a California night. May I fetch you a cloak?"

The girl laughed at him. "I have one out in the hall, near the door. . . . Are you really Mrs. Buckster's cousin? Or is she just—absorbing you?"

"Decker's my real name," Jeff said. "I never have had to use another."

"No," the girl said. "No. Not you. You're probably the only man on this ranch who hasn't. Pecos was telling me you had them put a desk in your room. What's that for?"

"You're a funny girl. . . . Why, I'm what they call a scientific cowman—

or I'd like to be. I believe there's money to be made in these old-time cow ranches if the segundo would only run them from a desk, instead of from a saddle. I think the important thing about a cattle ranch is what kind of grass grows where, and the kind of cows you're using, and putting hay out for them at just the right time."

"Instead of carrying a gun and wondering who is walking on your sacred land?"

He looked at her, startled: "I'm not much for guns."

She took his hand. "You're on my side, Jeff. You want to see the homesteader get a fair deal, don't you? The rest of these people don't care."

"But they can't, you know. The good free land went a great many years ago, in the Middle West. In the West, a quarter section's not a living."

"But you don't believe in making the homesteader worse off with guns and lawyers and trouble?"

"No," Jeff said.

"I'm glad to hear it," Miss Harriott said. "I was beginning to think I was wrong. Let's go for that walk. I'll show you Mrs. Buckster's Mexican Village."

JEFF's hat, creased Texas style instead of flat like a Californian's, and his gloves were on a table; there was a blue cloak on a high carved wood chair next to the table. "This it?" he asked.

He held it up. "No," she said. "I'll wear the red side out. It seems funny to think of wearing a Massachusetts General cape in California, doesn't it?"

He flung the cape so the red lining came outward, the blue inside. "This cape belong to a General?" he asked. "It's kind of like the dress capes they wear in the army."

She laughed. "No, silly. Massachusetts General Hospital is where I studied to be a nurse, Jeff."

"You know my first name," Jeff said. "And I don't know yours."

"It's Lora," she said. "But that doesn't give you permission to use it."

"G'wan, Lora," he laughed. He exaggerated his drawl a little. "This is California, not Boston."

"I always heard you Southerners were so chivalrous to the ladies."

"Lora, we are. Why, we cherish them like flowers to our bos—"

"That's enough," she said. But her eyes were sparkling—and not angry.

Jeff was feeling just wonderful as he followed Lora Harriott out into the California night.

It was full dark, now. Below them you could hear a dull booming that must be the ocean; but you could see nothing except soft, white mist, like cotton. But overhead the stars were clear and bright. Although May was

close at hand, it wasn't warm. Lora pulled her cape around her.

"Do you get that fog often?" Jeff asked.

"It's been foggy every night I've been here. I've been here only two weeks, but already I love California."

"Then you and Harvey Smith are just beginning, more or less?"

Her voice was a little cool. "I said I love California, don't you?"

"I like it fine, what I've seen of it. And it's a fine outfit I'm working for. It makes a man feel good to work for a big ranch like this. We'll—"

They were standing on the brow of a slope, with manzanitas behind them. Below them there seemed to be no world at all, just the fog. But up through the fog came voices. Lora Harriott put her hand on his arm; he listened, because he didn't want that hand to move away.

REBEL's voice: "Now, boys, you know the rules. This road's closed after dark. You want to go to Santy Monica, tomorrow morning'll have to do."

Pecos' voice: "G'wan, Reb, give it to 'em. They's just a bunch of—"

A strange voice: "Shut that kid up, old man. You're that old pore white the ranch's got to look after the kid, ain't you?"

"Misteh, they's two guns'll tell you how old, how poor, and how white I am. I've been trying to talk nice to you, but—"

"Sho—sho! Today we couldn't fish, an' tonight we can't go to town, an' tomorrow you'll be tellin' us when to go to bed, and when to get up. Me, I got everythin' I own into my homestead, an' I'm all fer findin' out now whether you Bucksters're gonna let me keep it or not. Start somethin', old man."

A new voice said: "Let's get outa here, Harv; they'll be more of 'em in. Listen, I hear horses now."

"Well, all right. But there'll be a showdown, an' soon."

Horses went away through the night.

Lora said with soft urgency: "That was Harvey Smith again. Oh, Jeff, why didn't you go help?"

"Rebel doesn't need any help."

"Rebel?" The girl dropped her hand from his arm. "I meant Harvey. He— Why, he wasn't armed, and Rebel was. And—"

"He talked right loud, for a man who wasn't armed. If the ranch says they can go through in the daytime, that's a lot."

"You're getting mad," the girl said. "I don't see why the Buckster ranch is anything to you. You never saw it before today."

"I'm taking their pay," Jeff said. "I'm digesting Buckster food this min-

ute, and I plan to put more of it away when I get this digested."

"Cowboys," Miss Harriott said. "Saddle-bums! I suppose you'd shoot Mr. Smith if he didn't come down to get his orders from the great Buckster Ranch?"

"Mr. Harvey Smith?" Jeff laughed. "Lora, I'm no gunman. I— Oh, let's forget it. You're pretty, and I just met you today, and what do we want to go talking cattle business for?"

"But this is important," Lora said. "Harvey Smith isn't rich. He's put just about all his money into a homestead. Are you going to tell him he can't run it?"

"Did you come walkin' with me to talk about Harvey Smith?" Jeff asked, rather roughly. "Leave it alone. It isn't women's business."

"Oh, don't give me that stupid, rural answer."

"Wow!"

"I mean it; I'll not be treated like a child."

JEFF reached out behind him and groped around until he found a tree to lean against. Like most horsemen, he did not enjoy standing very long. "Well, yes," he said. "I told you. I'm not one of these old Texas fogies. I believe a nester's got a right to his land. But not to ruin our land or our claims."

"What difference does it make to you?" Lora asked. "I've never understood you cowmen. You take a job this morning, and you're willing to die for your boss tonight."

"Yeah," Jeff said slowly. "Yeah. I never thought of it that way, but that's the way it is. . . . I dunno why. A good ranch is worth fighting for. Not the people who own it, but the ranch itself. Some day I'm going to have my own spread, and I wouldn't have a hand who didn't think the ranch came before him." He stared into the fog, thinking this over. "Not that killing's a pleasure, though."

"But what you tell the Sheriff if one of the other men on the ranch shot at Mr. Smith? Rebel, say?"

Jeff said: "Listen, what's the matter with you, Lora? You ate Mrs. Buckster's dinner; you—"

"Well, don't throw it up to me. That's part of my job."

"Oh, is it?" He could hear the old, brittle coldness coming into his voice. "What is? To spy on us, and—"

She said: "Oh!"

Jeff took a breath, muttered: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean just that. But what are you doin'? It was nice of Mr. McReuben to let your nesters put a road through. Lots of cattlemen wouldn't stand nesters this close."

"You're trying to be kings in the Twentieth Century," Lora exclaimed. "That's what you cowmen are trying

to do. Allowing homesteaders to be so close! What have you to say about it? The United States Government gave them the land. Not Mr. McReuben or old lady Buckster, or you. And the Government will see they stay there."

"Hey, now," he said. He found himself laughing. "You sure that hair of yours isn't red? What got you started?"

"At the homestead in Montana," Lora Harriott said, almost crying, "I had to help the doctors from town all one night. The cowmen stampeded the buggies and wagons after a homesteaders' dance. One little boy broke his leg, and lots of people—women, too—had barb-wire cuts."

"And on account of that, you're down on all cowmen? You shouldn't take a cattle ranch's invitation to eat, then."

"But that's part of my job," the girl cried. He could barely see her face in the dark. But he remembered how pretty she was. Bet she was wonderful when she got mad! "Our orders are to make friends of the ranchers."

"Oh, I see. But the Buckster Ranch," Jeff said, "has been good to your nesters."

"I still don't trust them," Lora said. "There's a catch. Oh, why are you working for them?"

"I'm a cattleman," Jeff said. "It's what I know."

"And you're going to start your job by making it impossible for Mr. Smith to live on his land. He's been so happy, up to now, and—"

"Oh, Lord," Jeff said, "do we have to fight on a pretty night like this? What do I care if Harvey Smith's happy? I don't even know the man. If it'll make you happy, I'll get him a job on the Buckster Ranch, driving a team or something. How'll that be?"

"It isn't the same. That's his land; he wants to work on it. Wouldn't you—if you owned the land?"

Before he thought, Jeff said: "I'm no nester."

Then it was too late. The girl was gone from him in the dark, calling: "Pecos, oh, Pecos! Will you take me back to the house?"

Jeff started after her, then sighed. No use. A woman was a woman, and if she thought you could milk range cattle, she would want it to be so. He'd have to let her go—for the time being, anyway. One thing, she wasn't completely gone on Harvey Smith, though she was pulling that way fast. But if she took her time deciding, the homesteading project would fail, as all of them did when they crowded cattle too close, and—

SUDDENLY he laughed in the dark, remembering his thought at dinner. Mr. McReuben had roped him; Mrs.

Buckster had hog-tied him; and he himself, by golly, had slapped the Buckster brand on his own flank.

But Lora Harriott's face, fading away in the mist, stuck in his mind a long time. If she went away when the project failed, he'd never see her again.

He knew then that if he never did see her again, nothing else was going to matter very much. Getting his own spread, building his own house, they were nothing without the right girl. And he was no kid; he had been in a great many towns, a great many States, even in a foreign country. And if he hadn't learned as much as maybe he ought to, he had learned one thing: a man didn't meet a girl very often who could do the things to him that Lora Harriott had.

Chapter Seven

THESE was still fog the next morning, but the sun was hitting it hard from the top, promising an early burn-off.

Shaving, washing, putting on fresh saddle-clothes, Jeff found himself whistling. He'd come to the ocean; he had a better job than he'd ever had before; his guns were safely stowed away deep in the bottom of his bag; and he'd met a girl! Sure, like any fool, he'd fought with the girl as soon as he'd met her; but that wasn't anything. They hadn't fought about anything important, only about her job. A job was nothing to a girl; these girls that went out and worked, they were just doing it till they found the right man. They hadn't fought about anything personal, had they?

Still whistling, he walked over to the mess-hall he had seen the night before. A dozen hands, most of them unshaved, dirty-looking, were eating down one side of the long table. There was a seat empty at the head of the table. Jeff sat down there.

As soon as he had done so, he knew that he'd done something that had a significance to these riders, if not to him.

A Chinese cook stuck his head out of a hole cut in the wall. "Exy-bacon, flappy-jax, oatymeally, clawfee," he said.

"Sure," Jeff told him.

The Chinese looked pained. "No," he said. "Exy-bacon, flappy-jax, oatymeally, clawfee. Which you want, please?"

"All of 'em, John," Jeff said. "I'm a hard-eatin' Texan longhorn."

"Ally-em?"

"Sure."

"Can do," said the cook with a broad grin, and disappeared again. In a minute he was back with a steaming bowl. "Oaty-meally."

Jeff turned to the nearest rider. "How's chances on the sugar and cream?"

The man grunted, and slid him a sugar-bowl and a can of milk. Well, if they didn't want to talk to a new hand, let them shut up till he was ready to give them orders.

The Chinese shoved his head through again. "Exy-bacon." As Jeff leaned back to exchange the oatmeal bowl for the plate of eggs, the Chinese said: "You wantchee li'l steak, too, Don Jeff?"

"Sure," Jeff said. The use of his name—and the title—had not escaped him. They knew who he was, and apparently they didn't care for it. He started stowing eggs away. "I always have a good appetite for my breakfast," he told the room.

Horses stopped outside, and there was some stamping on the porch. About eight men arrived, and it was amusing to count the number who came straight in without stopping at the basins outside to wash—five out of eight.

The last one in was Brownie, the big man who'd been worrying about Jeff getting his job, who had sicked D.J. on Jeff.

The greetings from the riders who were already eating were a little too cordial. Brownie was a man to fear.

Brownie walked to the head of the table, and stood above Jeff's chair. He seemed to be waiting for something, but there was no particular expression in the sharp black eyes. Jeff swallowed eggs and hooked a bootleg around the sawhorse that held the table up. "Hi, brother," he said, over his shoulder. "This your chair, your regular chair?"

Brownie said, "Yeah," very quietly. "Well, sit you down some place else," Jeff Decker said. "I'll leave it for you tomorrow. I know how it is, when a man gets attached to a piece of furniture."

Now the three punchers who had stopped to wash came in. One of them was the Tennessean D.J. Marks, who had stopped Jeff the night before. Jeff said: "Mawnin', D.J. Have a peaceful *noche*?"

D.J. grinned. "Yeah, Don Jeff, you was the only rustler I skeered up." He sat down near the foot of the table, but he didn't pull his chair in; he sat back, hands gripping the edge of the board in a way that would tell any cowman he was ready to jump up and fight.

Brownie said: "You the rider passed this man through last night?"

"Yes," D.J. Marks said. "He proved who he was."

Brownie moved around a little in front of Jeff. Alone of the men, he wore a pistol; but this did not mean

what it would have meant elsewhere, since Jeff had seen that Buckster night saddles carried rifles. "How'd he prove it, Slim? He didn't have no pass from me."

Marks said: "Well, I talked to him, Brownie, and he sounded all right."

"You're fired, Slim. Get your time and get off the Buckster Ranch."

D.J. gulped and nodded.

Jeff sighed. He said: "It's all right, Brownie. Marks asked me enough questions to know who I was."

The big man shoved fingertips under his belt, spread his legs. "New-comer," he said, "we don't pass people on the Buckster Ranch on their pretty blue eyes, or on talk. I'm night boss, and nobody moves around this rancho after dark without I give them a paper."

Jeff shrugged. He looked over his shoulder, away from Brownie, and said: "John, you got my little steak?"

"Li'l steak heah, Don Jeff."

Jeff made a long-armed swoop and changed plates again. He said, pleasantly: "I don't blame you for likin' this chair, Brownie. Right handy to the vittles." He cut his steak, took a bite, and talked around it. "No use you and me havin' trouble. Tell you what: You take care of the hoot-owls and the night-nannies, and me, I'll tend to my business too."

Brownie said, "Meanin' what?"

"Well," Jeff said, cheerfully, "I'll eat early, before you bring the night crew in. That way, we can both use this fine spot here. And I won't shoot you if you want to take a little mosey in the sunshine, an' don't you shoot me if I step out to admire the moon. You fire Slim there off the night crew, and I'll take him on my gang."

Everything about Brownie marked him as a cut above your run-of-the-mill gun bully. Now, with the anger upon him, some of his drawl dropped away, and he said in a clipped voice, "What if I don't want it that way?"

"Why," Jeff said, smiling happily, "the sun's up, Brownie. You'd have to wait for dark to do anything about it; you're night boss; and me, I'm sort of second boss in the sunshine. Which means, I rate you at the moment, like we say in the Army, and it would be a breach of discipline—and plumb disrespectful—for you to climb my boyish frame while the sun's up."

Brownie began to strip off his gloves, slowly, keeping his eyes on Jeff.

Jeff looked at the strong white hands. Clean hands, wonderfully smooth.

"Now that I come to think it over, Brownie," Jeff said, "it would be just as much off the trail for me to take a wallop at you after dark. Why, hell, man, if we want to fight, we're going to have time for just two punches a day, one at sunup, the other at sun-

down. You can't have no satisfactory fracas on that basis, Brownie. I'd like to fight you, Brownie. I'm a man always relishes a good mix. But honest, pard, I don't see no way of doing it."

Brownie said: "You could jaw me to death, like you're doing now."

"No, I'm through," Jeff said, finishing his steak and flapjacks and draining his coffee. "I guess we'll just have to be friends, Brownie, without the preliminary courtesy of knocking each other down." He stood up. "Take your chair, friend."

BROWNIE sat down. He may not have liked what had happened, but he let it go, and bawled, angrily: "Where's my breakfast, Chink?"

The cook stuck his head out. "Coming along, Missuh Blownie, good blek-fas'."

"You make him give you one of those steaks," Jeff said, and walked down the mess-hall. "D.J.," he said, "you get you a good nap and turn out with the day-riders tomorrow." He moved on to the door. "Mawnin', you night-riders. Sleep tight."

There was a pretty good chorus of "Morning, Don Jeff," thrown back at him. If Brownie didn't join in, you couldn't ask for too much at once. Jeff went on out into a sun that had already burned up most of the mist.

A quiet voice behind him said: "You ready to take a look-see over the Buckster Ranch, Jeff?"

Jeff said: "Sure, Mr. McReuben. All ready for work." He grinned at Rebel, who was sitting the Virginian black in front of the bunkhouse, holding the reins on Mr. McReuben's flashy sorrel.

"Pecos got fresh," Rebel said, "so I'm makin' him saddle your mare for you."

Mr. McReuben was in the saddle, making the sorrel dance. Jeff walked down to the dirt, put a hand on Rebel's hornless pommel. "How come you ride one of these dude rigs, Rebel? You can't rope off this, can you?"

"I never did learn how to throw a rope," Rebel said. "Fo'ty years in the West, and I ain't never roped a steer." He patted his sidearms. "I've made my living with these. Like Brownie. You come up ag'in' Brownie yet?"

"Sure," Jeff said. "We had a little brush-up." He rolled himself a smoke, watched Pecos leading the golden mare around the corner. "It fills me up with pride ever' time I see that horse and know she's mine, Mr. McReuben."

"A pretty speech, but don't change the subject, Jeff," the segundo said. "Why, Rebel, this longhorn here talked Brownie out of wanting to fight, at all."

"I don't carry a gun," Jeff said flatly.

He took the mare from Pecos, gave the boy a grin, and mounted. "I'm right eager to see this spread," he said. "Not what it used to be," Pecos said professionally. "Used to be we could run the cows back into the sagebrush chaparral to rest the grass, in winter. Now it's full of nesters back there."

As they rocked along, the mist rose swirling in their faces, the sun already warm on their backs. A herd of blotted white-faces stood in their trail, stupidly—steer-stuff. As the horses slowed, the steers moved lazily downhill. Jeff pulled up.

"Mr. McReuben," he said, "let's get them out of here as soon as possible." He nodded at the cows munching grass below them.

"Sure," Mr. McReuben said. "I planned to. Soon's they put a little weight on their frames, and the market rises a little."

"No," Jeff said. "Now. Today, tomorrow, as soon—"

Mr. McReuben pulled up. "You, Pecos, listen to this. Talk, Jefferson."

"Why," Jeff said, "those are grades, high-cutter cattle or low feeder in any market. All right. The same land will support just as many pure Herefords, and every pound you put on a Hereford is worth ten to twenty-five per cent more in the market. These are quarter-grades or worse. Some of them aren't an eighth Hereford, and that means they have to eat a lot more grass to put on the same fat."

"Of course," Mr. McReuben said. "Sure. But why sell thin cattle when you can wait a few weeks and sell fat cattle?"

"Because you've only got so much grass. When they've eaten it, it isn't there till next spring."

"Sure. But you're getting your money back in a higher price. The market's down now, in the spring, especially on cutters. All over the country the farmers and dairymen are slaughtering off milch cows that won't freshen again."

"Sell this sort of stuff," Jeff said, "when the market's down. Just the time. And don't take the money home. Put it right into li'l' old skinny Hereford yearling heifers. They're cheap this time of year, too. For the same reason."

"By golly!" Mr. McReuben said. "You hear that, Rebel?"

Rebel removed his hat and bowed. "Fust sense I heared spoke on a cattle ranch in many's the year. Brains comes to the cow country."

Mr. McReuben said: "Now how come you know that sort of thing, Jeff, and I don't? I've been in the cow business longer than you. I know Herefords fatten better than grades. That's why I bought that bull from you. I planned to have my next crop

of calves be closer to pure, and so on." The little segundo looked rueful. "I thought I was being mighty scientific. But a thing like you said— Why we can make an immediate profit that way, swapping bad steers for good heifers. I don't see how that is, Jeff. I never heard that a rancher could make a profit off the market men."

"He can't," Jeff said. "You take about five-per-cent loss. It costs money in day salaries for a crew to drive the steers in, bring the heifers back."

"Oh, that. Why, we've got twenty men riding around doing nothing."

"Why? Why have them, if they're doing nothing?"

Mr. McReuben's small, hard hands were tight on the sorrel's reins again, his back stiff. "Why, Jeff, you're going a bit fast, now. I'm segundo here. You will confine your activities to improving our cattle, perhaps to getting more good out of the range. That is your department. If you need a hand or so to help you, you give them their orders; they are under you. Nothing else on the ranch need concern you."

Jeff said: "I'm supposed to droop my head in shame, like Pecos does when you correct his grammar. But I won't. This is my ranch; this is my outfit, since I signed on. If it doesn't do well, I don't do well. You're wastin' money and time maintainin'—"

Rebel said: "Jeff, I plumb like you, like the fella says. Only, you go on talkin' that way to Mr. McReuben, an' yo're gonna git a slug between yore ribs."

"Wasting money," Jeff said, "maintaining a bunch of hands to ride around and make trouble. What do you need them for?"

Mr. McReuben said: "No, Rebel. This Decker, here, likes to talk. Let him talk. You should have heard how free and brash he talked to Brownie." The thin lips were white with suppressed anger, but the small frame was still on the sorrel's back. "Only, Decker, while you talk, we might as well be riding to where you left your war-bag."

"Gun-talk," Jeff said proddingly. "Cowpuncher talk. Why do you have the men?"

"Now, by God, Jeff, yo're goin' too far," Rebel said.

"Lemme take him, Reb, huh?" Pecos asked. "Lemme take him?"

"Hold the boy, Rebel. Why, Decker, let's say that a cowboy—as you well know, having been one as recently as yesterday—doesn't get much. The whole payroll isn't more than about six hundred dollars a month for Brownie's department. And we have to have them once in a while, for round-ups and so on."

"Six hundred a month," Jeff said, "would pay for two teams and two

men to break this downhill land and put in some of the new grasses. Rhodes grass, for instance, that will feed five steers where wild oats feeds one. And leave money over for lumber and a carpenter to build bottle-neck chutes all over the ranch so's five men could round up all the steers on the place."

Pecos laughed wildly. "What they do in Texas about the mortgage men an' the highway dudes an' the nesters? Build a great big ol' fence to keep 'em out?"

Jeff said: "I'm already fired, I guess. I didn't know about the mortgage. But mortgages don't matter. You—"

"No, son? You can't talk to a banker like you did to Brownie. He'll still foreclose."

"A bank won't foreclose on something that's making money. Start this ranch making money, and the bank will eat out of your hand. Grow alfalfa, store winter feed. Did you know that a given field could feed six times as many cows through the summer alone as it could all year round?"

"Lemme take him, Reb. I'm old enough to get a notch on my hawg-leg, an' I sure aim to name the first one after a sartin Texan."

MR. McREUBEN said: "Hush up, Pecos." His shoulders slumped a little. "I'm an educated man, and I know sense when I hear it. That crew of Brownie's eats us out of house and home, and makes trouble. But how about nesters, Jeff? You would leave them there to make an unsightly mess and a—"

"Nesters never stay. Let them get a bellyful of it and move out."

"No," Mr. McReuben said.

They had stopped in front of Jeff's cottage now. Out on the bunkhouse porch, Brownie and some of his night-herd were taking the sun. One of the riders yelled over: "Oh, Don Jeff, may I come an' write a love-letter on yore desk?" There were loud, pleased whoops of laughter from the other punchers.

"Talking about an unsightly mess!" Jeff said softly.

"They're not pretty," Mr. McReuben said. He moved his head, and Rebel and Pecos rode over, sat their horses in front of the bunkhouse. The punchers were still.

"I'll pack and be out of here," Jeff said. His hand ran down the mare's neck. "Can I get a Mexican to drive me to town?"

"I'll do the hiring and firing around here," Mr. McReuben said. "You make some sense about the mortgage. Mrs. Buckster's had the habit of going in to the bank and getting money when she wanted money."

"They did that in Texas. The banks own Texas."

"I'm trying to think like you think," said Mr. McReuben. "If you know the nesters are going to fail, and I know it, why couldn't we leave them alone? It would be cheaper to pay men to put the land back like it was when they left. That ever been tried?"

"Not in Texas," Jeff said. "And maybe that's why Texas ran downhill."

Mr. McReuben stuck out his hand. "You may be a little shy about guns, but I think you've got nerve. I'll make a deal, Jeff. Get out a report that will make the bank happy, and I'll have Rebel get rid of Brownie and his crew. We'll try business methods."

Jeff shook hands. "I'll get rid of Brownie. I don't need to hide behind Rebel."

"We're just shaking hands on the first part. Unfortunately, men who like to use guns use them somewhat better than those who take up the art through necessity."

Jeff said: "I—" Then: "Yes, Mr. McReuben."

Seeing them shake hands, Rebel rode back. Pecos trailed along behind, dejectedly.

"Trouble comin' down the trail, Don Jeff," Rebel said. "Trouble on a pinto pony."

"I've got good news for her, for once," Jeff said.

"You doin' this for that gal or for the Buckster Ranch?" Mr. McReuben asked.

Jeff laughed and said: "I don't know." But he was looking in the direction of the homestead road.

Chapter Eight

BLOOD in her eye again," said Rebel. "Me, I'm a timid man." He cocked a rheumy eye at the sky, now bright and cloudless. "Jefferson, mebbe so I misjudged you before, when I described you as bein' a peace-loving and law-lovin' citizen."

"That's all right, Rebel."

"On second thought, Texan, no man with a strict obsession for the peaceful walks of life would deliberately accept the courtship of that firebrand from Massachusetts. Had Grant an' McClellan called on the ladies of the North for their troops, the war would have been bloodier, but shorter. Me, as I say, I am takin' me a pasear. C'mon, Pecos."

The boy said, abruptly: "We gonna run Brownie out, Rebel? You an' me?"

They started down the back-trail. Rebel's voice floated back: "Now, son, they is too many of them. Some strategy will be necessary."

"Aw, Reb, you never lemme get into a fight. How'm I gonna learn to run a ranch when you never let me do no fighting?"

"Any fighting, Pecos. Or do you want the seat of your *calzones* dusted?"

Lora Harriott was perhaps a hundred yards away now. Her voice was clear and serious: "Mr. McReuben?"

"I should have taken me after Rebel," Mr. McReuben said. "That girl needs a taking-down, Jeff."

She was with them now. "Mr. McReuben, do you realize what's happened? Do you know that Buckster cattle broke Harvey Smith's fence last night and ruined his vegetable patch, smashed through his chicken yard?"

"Now, Miss Harriott—" The blue eyes got brighter. "Don Jeff, here, is in charge of everything that has to do with nesters." The quirt cracked, and the sorrel horse was gone.

Lora Harriott turned to look at Jeff. "Oh," she said. "I misjudged you. I said you weren't a gunman. Why didn't you explain?"

He said: "Hey, hold on. I am in charge of the nesters, like Mr. McReuben said. But that doesn't mean I'm going to shoot them."

"Mr. Decker, when you say you're in charge of the nesters—though how anybody but the Government could put you in that position, I fail to see—you mean, of course, in charge of getting rid of the homesteaders."

"No. Listen, little spitfire—"

SHE laughed. "You mean you're just going to leave them there? Let them pass through the Buckster Ranch whenever they want to? Not harass them? Oh, I know. Mr. McReuben was so nice to them. He let them put a road through the ranch. And I've found out why! So the Government wouldn't cut a pass through to the valley. So he'd have control of them. So he could bother them, and make their lives—"

"Li'l ol' spitfire, you do go on!"

"Riding the earth as though you own it! A girl ought to be proud to take up with any cowhand. Of course. The bold *caballero*! Riding out poor farmers, cutting their fences, ruining their poor little gardens. As though they didn't have enough—"

"Hush!"

"What?"

"I said, *hush*. You don't know what you're talkin' about. I am not going to ride them out. I didn't cut their fences."

The girl was still for a moment. "Take your hand off Nadita's bridle—I won't ride away. You *are* going to leave the homesteaders there?"

"I'm not going to do anything to run them out."



"Newcomer," said Brownie, "I'm night boss, and nobody moves around this ranch after dark without I give them a paper."

"You mean Mrs. Buckster wants them there?"

Jeff said: "No. I'm a truth-speaking man. We—all right then, the Bucksters—don't want them there. But I've told Mr. McReuben I didn't think they could make out on their quarter-sections, and I mean it. We'll give them a chance."

She almost smiled this time. "Either you're a better liar than any I've met, or you're telling the truth. I—I like it. A new chance for the homesteader."

"No," Jeff said. "No. They have no chance. Poor, benighted dirt farmers. Fool hoe-men. Dirt is dirt to them, and they'll stick a plow into it. They have no chance, but we—I—won't do anything to make it worse."

"Oh, Jeff, I believe you."

"Lady, you don't know how happy that makes me."

She pulled Nadita around near to his palomino. "Named your horse yet, Jeff?"

"No'm. I been busy."

"How about Mariposa?"

Jeff brought the palm of his hand down on the mare's poll. "Yo' name is Mariposa, hoss! . . . You must have been thinking about it."

"Well, yes."

"Couldn't very well think about the horse without thinking about the rider, could you?"

"Oh—hush!"

JEFF laughed. "All right. Come ride along with me, and we'll take care of your friend Harvey Smith. No, I mean settle the trouble." Jeff watched her face. "How come he's the one always pops up? He a trouble-maker, or is it just that you take a special interest in him?"

"Neither." She said it a little too quickly. "He's a—fine young man. But he's—a sort of leader among the homesteaders, and he has the quarter where the wagon road comes off the Buckster land onto the free land."

"Sort of puts him in the middle?"

"Yes." They were riding along the trail, paralleling the shore. "Jeff?"

"Hmmm?" He was thinking of Harvey Smith, telling himself that Smith couldn't have much of an edge with the girl if she'd only been here two weeks before he came.

"Want to see something pretty?"

"Lady, I see the prettiest thing in Southern Cal—"

"I meant scenery. Come on." Lora turned her horse to the left, downhill. There was a little track through the chaparral here, a stock or game trail. Then abruptly the chaparral was gone, and they were in a little flat that looked like pictures of Long Island estates Jeff had seen in classy magazines—smooth grass, running off into the sand, and the Pacific beyond—

"Say!"

Lora got off Nadita, dropped her reins to let the pinto graze. Jeff swung down with her. "I come here often," the girl said. "You know, I'm not sure the Bucksters know it's here. It's like Massachusetts, like a park. Sometimes I go in swimming, Jeff, and— Why, Jeff Decker! You're blushing!"

"I might be, at that." He laughed uncertainly. "Just a country boy."

"Did you think I didn't—" She ran to Nadita's side, laughing softly. It was funny how much surer of herself she was than he in so many ways, how uncertain in others. "Look," she cried, waving something made out of black silk at him. She held it up in front of her. It was a bathing suit. "Why, Jeff, what a horrid mind you must have."

He laughed back at her. "Well, how would I know the fashion in Massachusetts?"

"I'm not a New Englander any more; I'm right at home in California. There's my tub"—pointing at the Pacific—"and there's my boudoir over there. That clump of scrub oak." She made a face at him. "If you had a suit in your saddlebags, we could go swimming."

"Lady, I done my blushing for the day. They aren't red, but if you'd give me a minute's headstart into the water, I think maybe they'll do."

Five minutes later he was taking his first swim in the Pacific. It was funny; when he floated on his back, the Buckster land disappeared, and the mountains seemed to hang straight over the sea.

There was a splash, and a hand touched his shoulder. "Cold," Lora touched.

"Sure is. Nice, though. No sharks, are there?"

"Never heard of any." They were swimming side by side now. "I'm crazy about swimming, aren't you, Jeff? When I was a little girl, we used to go out to Cape Cod in the summer, and I'd put on my bathing suit in the morning before breakfast, and not take it off till Mother made me dress for dinner."

"Never swam much," Jeff panted. "Only place you could swim around Van Horn was in the dirt tanks we stored water in for the stock. By the time I was ten, I could stand up in any of 'em. Two strokes, an' you'd hit the end."

"I can't imagine being a kid without swimming. Did you have fun?"

"Sure. Loren—that's my cousin—and I had ponies from the time we were five, and we used to ride all over the ranch."

"How big was it?"

"Five sections of deeded land. Thirty-two hundred acres."

"You're getting tired," Lora said.

"Let's swim in."

"We can swim in, all right, but I can't get out, not in these pants."

They started for shore, and once she brushed against him and he felt as though he could swim on forever. When they reached the breakers, he got his arm around Lora to help her, but that was a mistake; the surf caught them and they were knocked about and separated.

His feet brushed the sand, but the bottom seemed to melt away when he tried to stand on it; he swam again, a breaker caught him from behind, and he was shot out on the pebbly beach.

LORA's laugh brought him to his feet. "I know now why you wouldn't come out. I thought it was modesty."

"Nope, vanity. If you were a lady, you'd look the other way. I'll go put on my pants."

He left the wet flannels on the bush, whipped himself dry and put on his levis again. Stamping into his boots, he yelled, "I'm coming out," but Lora was still sitting on the grass at the edge of the beach. The part of her that the bathing suit didn't cover was all glowing gold in the sun. Her back was against a rock. "Sit down, cowboy. I'm not going to get dressed till I've had another swim."

"I ought to be getting up to see your Harvey Smith."

"Well, make me a cigarette and sit a minute." She laughed up at him. "I smoke. I learned it in training school. Shocked?"

"Kinda," he admitted. "Though I guess there's no reason why a lady shouldn't smoke if she wanted to."

"I only do it among friends. I'd probably be fired out of the nursing profession if I was caught. . . . I wish I could do that."

"There's no trick to it. Except you gotta start when you're about ten," he said, rolling her a cigarette, holding it out for her to lick. "Loren and I used to practice behind the saddle-shed."

He lit her cigarette, made one for himself and squatted on his heels. "Used to practice with cornsilk."

"How did you happen to lose your ranch?" Lora asked.

"We didn't. Loren's still got it. Only, we used to use the range behind us, about fifty sections of it. Gov'ment opened it up, and God's own boiling of sagebrushers moved in. Plowed the buffalo grass under, made a wreck of it, and finally sold out to the big outfit on the other side of the range. Our li'l old piece won't carry enough to have two owners. I sold out to Loren. I was tired of sagebrushin', and I went from there to school. After that—" His lips went tight. . . . After that, the two guns heavy on his flanks, and the reputation that followed him and

somehow led from one job to the next, and the nickname Double Decker.

"Funny," the girl said. She pitched a stone into the ocean, her bare arm clumsy in the motion no woman can master, and strangely helpless and appealing. "My grandfather had a farm. Forty acres on the Connecticut River near Hatfield. He made enough out of it to put my dad through medical school and buy him a practice."

"That's farming. This is ranching. Forty acres carries one cow in the sage land."

"Grandpa had a prize dairy herd."

"That's New England. Fella I knew told me his folks had a place in Jersey. Guess they were rich people; it was what you call a model farm."

"Well, couldn't those methods be applied—"

"What are you gonna do for water? Los Angeles is building a pipe line now, clear out to Owens Valley, two hundred miles, just for drinkin' water. They'll never, not in a million years, h'ist it clear to the top of the Santa Monica Mountains to help out your nesters. No, those folks up there will dry-farm, and enjoy it. And dry-farming's a fool's game."

"Harvey Smith says in one good year he can make sixteen thousand dollars off his claim."

"Oh, Lord, have patience! I've been hearing that all my life. Pencil farming. Sure, sure. If you catch the quarter at just the point where the farmer has it all plowed—not before he's broken it all, and not after he's given up and let part of it go back to mustard and greasewood—and if he's got it all seeded with premium seed—which no nester can afford—and if there isn't any wind to knock the grain off at the last minute— But do all those things ever happen, except on paper?"

"But you're a pencil farmer; or rancher. You said so yourself. You—" Her eyes probed into his. "Is this some new device of Mr. McReuben's to get the homesteaders off their guard? Jeff, tell me."

He stood up. "Miss Harriott," he said, "you better go back to Massachusetts. You've got the wrong kind of mind for the West."

She stood up too. Barefooted, she seemed very small; and the same feeling he had had when she threw the stone came back over him. "I love the West, Jeff," she said. "I do. That's why I care so much. But I hate the bloodshed and battling."

"So do I," he said. "I'm trying to avoid it—prevent it."

"But you'd still fight for the Buckster Ranch if you had to?"

"If it needed me. Sure. People fight in wars and they call it patriotism. Well, a good ranch, a solid

ranch, has given me my chance. Sure I'd fight. Only, I don't want to."

"You cowmen fight because you like to. Because you haven't got justice on your side and you can't afford to go to law, or to argue. Out with guns! In Montana—"

"Don't tell me about Montana. I've been there. We don't go to law, because we haven't time. If you saw a man drowning a baby, you wouldn't look for a policeman until you'd pulled the baby out of the water, would you? When we see men ruining land, washing it out, we can't wait. Loren and I went to law. We humbly petitioned Congress to change that nesting land to National Forest. Teddy Roosevelt had just got McKinley to pass the National Forest Act; it was going to save the cattleman. Sure. And you know what happened? They kept tabling the petition, and when they finally read it, the nesters had established enough residence to be able to sell their titles. And we were so broke we couldn't buy them, and we were crowded out. That's good law-talk for you!"

As he mounted Mariposa, and got out of there, he thought she called him. But riding hard for the wagon road and Mr. Harvey Smith, he didn't care, until he remembered that his underwear was still hanging on a scrub oak. Then his anger dissolved in laughter.

Chapter Nine

HE came to a bluff, and the road forked there. Down below him in a little hollow a village nestled; the tile roofs, gently rounded adobe corners of the buildings, and the little fountain in the plaza told him it was Mexican. Sure pretty. The houses were tinted pastel shades of dusty pink and cream and blue, and in the square some woman had hung out a long line of little girls' dresses, in bright colors. Peaceful. The Mexicans maybe had something. Once this had all been theirs, all this California, and it had been ruled from Mexico City by politicians who had never seen the Coast. So the Californians had let the Americans in, and the Americans had taken the government away from Mexico City. But they had also taken the land away from the Californians. In fact, they had even taken away their name, because the native Spanish-American was neither Mexican nor American—

But they hadn't fought. Except for the few of them who went hoot-owl and stole horses and stagecoach chests—Murrietta, Vasquez and so on—they had cheerfully taken what little of this lovely land the Americans wanted to leave them, and made the best of it.

Maybe they had something, Jeff thought, turning his horse uphill. Maybe a rancher ought to give in when stupid politicians legislated his ranch out of business, and raise bullfrogs in the bathtub, if they left him a bathtub—if he'd ever had a bathtub.

Mariposa had brought him to the fence line that stretched its lonely length into the distance. He got down to open the gate. A sign said: *THIS ROAD IS PRIVATE PROPERTY, Permission to Pass Revocable at Any Time.* It was signed *Buckster Ranch, per J. G. Garrison, Attorney-at-law.*

Jeff regarded the sign as though he would find the answer to a lot of problems written there, but nothing came. He shut the gate behind him, and turned left on a guess, leaving the road behind and following the barbed wire. A few hundred yards from the gate he found it; fresh baling wire gleaming new at a mended place in the fence. He dropped Mariposa's reins on the ground and squatted on his heels, observing tracks and the marks on the broken wire. Cattle had been through here, all right; but it was hard to tell whether horses had driven them or not. Someone had been along on a horse, but it was probably Harvey Smith, after the breakthrough. Anyway, Brownie would just have hazed the cattle in. On the Buckster side, there was no leaf mold to carry a print, and the 'dobe was packed and hard.

Thoughtfully, he stood up. He had no doubt that the cattle had been helped, encouraged and forced through the fence. And since it had been done and there was no undoing it, Jeff was thankful that there was no legal proof. Deputies—

A voice said: "I swore I'd shoot the next Buckster, two- or four-legged, that put hoof or foot on my land. You're it, cowboy."

Jeff's hands had been born in Texas. He didn't have to tell them to raise themselves when they heard that voice. He turned slowly, to face Harvey Smith. The young farmer was red-faced, either from anger or exertion; the sweat on his forehead would mean exertion. "I'm not armed, Smith," he said. He looked at the shotgun in the young farmer's hands. "Anyway, that thing won't fire. The barrel's cracked."

Smith proved he had seldom used a shotgun this way before. He fell for the stale trick, and dropped his eyes. Jeff's long arm shot out, twisted the gun from the farmer's hands. The action was swift and smooth.

Smith's eyes narrowed as he said: "All right; shoot and be—"

"Naw," Jeff drawled. "Here, catch." He tossed the gun.

Smith caught it, awkwardly. He shifted it from one big hand to the



Jeff's arm shot out, twisted the gun from the farmer's hands. Smith's eyes narrowed as he said: "All right; shoot and be—"

other for a minute, uncertainly, then leaned against a fence-post. "Well?"

"I'm new on the Buckster Ranch," Jeff said. "I've been put in charge of graze, and so on. One of these school-house ranchers."

"Yeah? You didn't learn to grab that gun in no school I ever heard of."

Jeff let it pass. "One of my jobs is seeing about you people."

Smith snorted. "That last man was doin' all right. That Brownie! What d'you do, pack a Gatling gun?"

"I don't like Brownie much. But men like that are sometimes necessary to a ranch."

"What for?"

Jeff smiled. "What I came to see you about, some of the cattle broke your fence last night."

"Two hundred of 'em ran all over my land," Smith said. "Trampled down my hen-house. Ruined my vegetable garden. And they didn't break no fence, an' you know it. That Brownie broke it for them."

"All right," Jeff said. "Mrs. Buckster wants to pay you for the damage."

Harvey Smith stood very straight, staring at Jeff. "Get your horse," he said slowly, "and come on back to where I was working. My team's fresh broke. They won't stand long."

They went down the steep side of a barranca, up the other side to a field that was still black from the burned brush. Jeff noted that the chaparral had burned back so evenly that the field had square corners. "You're a good farmer, Harvey."

"Yeah. I'm all right. Just that I don't make any money." Smith laughed, and a long ridge of muscle moved in his right forearm as he untied the horses' heads from the mountain-lilac posts. He said: "This 'dobe's sure tough plowing."

Jeff said, "I know," and squatted on his heels while Smith took a firm push on the plow handles and clucked to his team. The team started, the horses' rumps wrinkling with effort.

They moved three feet, and the plow point stuck, and Harvey Smith let them plunge ahead futilely, seeming to urge them with his body. Then he gave it up and pulled the horses down. Sweat had broken out again upon the young farmer's face, was running ribbon-like down the sides of his neck. "Whoa, hosses."

"What do you want to plow this time of year for?" Jeff broke off a chunk of adobe. "It won't rain for another six months."

"Water's in there now. This adobe keeps it sealed up. If I kin get her broken and harrowed, I can raise me a crop of potatoes."

"You'll kill your team."

Harvey Smith said: "I'll run my farm, cowboy." His voice was no longer friendly.

"Yes," Jeff persisted, "but I really want to know. I told you I went to a school. Why didn't you plow sooner, when the land was soft?"

"Ran out of money. Had to take a job on day labor, over in the valley. Now I'm back. I broke me five acres

last year, but by golliess, I'll crack forty this year."

"And make sixteen thousand dollars a year."

"Listen. I don't want any trouble with you Bucksters. We appreciate McReuben lettin' us put that road through. But he don't own us."

"Mr. McReuben."

"You tryin' to scare me?"

"I don't have to. The dirt's scared you. Adobe's scared you."

"Yes? Some of the other homesteaders are gettin' teams. We'll hitch up two teams, four teams, eight if we have to, but we'll plow her. Once she's broken, you can work her. We have to make crops; we're poor men."

"So am I. But I never figured I could change that any by fighting a mess of adobe. But this isn't getting around to what I came to see you about. How much damage do we owe you?"

Harvey Smith picked up the plow handles again. "Nothin'. Giddap, hosses."

"Whoa," said Jeff. "What is this? We did damage; we'll pay for it. You need the money."

"Not that kind. I been givin' it a good goin'-over. I'm a kind of a leader up here among the homesteaders. I take Buckster money, and I'm a Buckster man."

"No. I tell you this is a new deal."

"I'll believe it when that wild crew that Brownie heads is off your land. Now g'wan."

Jeff put his hand on Mariposa's saddlehorn. "Say," he said, "will you take a favor from me personally?"

Not from the Bucksters?" He wanted to test himself, to see if he had this capacity for being a business man, a desk-rancher. So far, he was pleased with himself, for he had not been at all sure that a cowman could successfully meet with an angry nester without the use of a gun.

"What is it?"

"Let me take a handful of your soil here and test it. I'm going to run tests on our fields, and I'd like to include yours. It'll help me, and maybe I can tell you something that'll help you."

"Why, sure," Harvey Smith said. "Sure. Take a clod." He watched with interest while Jeff selected a clod, put it in a glass jar in his saddle bag, labeled it: *H. Smith*. "Lemme know how it comes out."

"Right," Jeff said, swinging up. "I'll do that. And maybe I'll have a surprise for you one of these days. Maybe Brownie—"

"That would shore be good news. So long, pardner."

"My name's Jeff Decker."

"I heard of a feller," said Harvey Smith, "back home. Name of—or they called him—Double Decker. Any kin?"

Jeff smiled with his mouth only. "Could be. I got a lot of folks."

Harvey Smith laughed and shook his head. "Must not be, 'cause you'd remember this'n. He shot three men one time that I heard of. They were all pretty much like Brownie, I hear, an' he gave 'em first chance to draw."

"Maybe," Jeff said, "he was just a kid who got himself a reputation. They tell me once that happens, gunmen keep comin' like flies to sugar to see just how good the kid is."

"Think you're wrong, Jeff. I figger them fellers enjoy killin' to begin with, else they'd never get a start."

"I don't know," Jeff said. "I don't know. . . . Anyway, Harvey, I wish you'd take that money."

"So long, Jeff."

"Good-by. I can see the way you feel." Jeff put out his hand and they shook. Then Jeff rode away.

Chapter Ten

HUNGER rode the saddle with him as he neared the bluff where the road split. Why not try a California lunch? He was more likely to get what he called real Texas chile there than he was at the bunkhouse.

Smiling, he rode into the Mexican village. He went up to the little store marked *Aborrotas* and dropped the palomino's lines on the ground. "How about a feed for me and my mare?" he asked the fat grocer in Spanish. "I'm Don Jeff."

The grocer came out from behind the counter, unsmiling under his drooping black mustache. He bowed to Jeff, and went out to the horse. With deft hands, he unsaddled her, gave her a quick, thorough rub with an old gunnysack; he led her to the fountain in the middle of the plaza and let her drink, then brought her back to the front of the store. He supplied a new rope to halter her with, a new bucket from his stock to put oats in, and tied her to the hitching rack in front of the store. He waited till the mare began to eat; then he came back to his counter and bowed to Jeff.

"You will follow me?" he asked in English.

Puzzled, Jeff said: "Sure. Only, you didn't have to do all that. I just wanted some grain. I could feed my own horse."

"The señor is kind." The Mexican held a curtain up so that Jeff could pass through to the living-quarters behind the store. A thin Mexican woman regarded the two with frightened brown eyes. The storekeeper said in Spanish: "The señor is hungry. You will feed him."

The woman dipped two enchiladas from a pot on the stove, added beans, fished up a handful of radishes from the water in an olla on the window sill, and set the plate in front of Jeff without speaking. Her husband poured thin red San Tomas wine from a bottle, put the glass in front of the rider, bowed. "The señor will have something further?"

In his best Spanish, Jeff said: "It is the hour of lunch. Why, then, do you not join me?"

"The señor is kind," the *paisano* said again. But he did not sit down.

Jeff became insistent. "I am a stranger," he said. "It is lonesome, riding a new country. I would be honored."

For the first time the fear in the Mexican's eyes lifted a little. "If the señor insists," he said, and shrugged. "But the honor is too great." Nevertheless he sat down, and the woman served him with a dish precisely like Jeff's.

"This is a good country, this Alta California," Jeff said conversationally. "You have been here long?"

"On this spot was born my father," the Mexican said, briefly.

"So?" Jeff swallowed his wine and smiled at the woman, who refilled it. "But this store looks new a few years ago."

"The old store was built by my grandfather," the man said. "Perhaps it was time that a new one arrived. . . . The señor will have more frijoles?"

"They are very good," Jeff said, allowing the woman to put more beans on his plate. Jeff ate more slowly

now, trying to figure out what it was the Mexicans were trying to hide from him, what the origin was of the hostility they disguised with fear. "I have been in many Spanish homes," he told the woman, "in my own country, Texas, and in both Old and New Mexico, even across the water in Cuba. These, perhaps, are the best of the many frijoles I have eaten."

The florid Spanish compliment went a long way toward breaking the ice. The man politely followed it up: "From which part of the great Texas comes the señor?"

"The mountains east of El Paso gave me birth," Jeff said. "From my home, we could see the Rio Grande. You have been to old Mexico?"

"Never," the storekeeper said. Outside, in the store, footsteps banged and spurs jingled, and Jeff knew the man was no longer listening to him. The Mexican said, too casually, "A customer deprives me of the pleasure of your company, señor," and rose to go. But as he pushed the curtain aside, Jeff purposely twisted around in his seat.

THE man who had come in was not one of the inhabitants of the Mexican village; he was Brownie.

"Now, by God," the big man cried, "ain't there any place a man can eat without this dude croppin' up, Cahuilla? G'wan up to the ranchhouse, fancypants, and leave me to enjoy one meal."

"You eat here every day?"

"What's it to yuh? Decker, you an' me—"

Jeff turned, bowed to Cahuilla. "When I came, señor, you were afraid. Was it of this man?"

Señor Cahuilla shrugged. "Señor, I am a poor man. El Señor Brown, here, he is welcome to what I have. Only, I fear me, if all the vaqueros on this ranch come here for lunch, what is there left for me?"

"Brownie," Jeff said, "you're not only a bully: you're a cheap bully. Stealing lunches from little Mexican storekeepers! Do you take candy from children?"

Brownie's eyes shone, and as Jeff had noticed once before, anger improved the big man's speech. "Well," said Brownie, "you suddenly begin to sound like something. This morning I feared you'd be too delicate to fight."

Jeff said, slowly: "We're both sort of second-segundos on this ranch. It's all right for the hands to roll around on the bunkhouse floor, but when the bosses start fightin', it puts a hole in the ranch."

"You mean you won't fight?"

"Yes, I'll fight, Brownie. Because you're not good for this ranch. I don't know why you gave up gambling to become a gunman, but I've

seen how you take care of your pretty hands, and I'll tell you a couple of things."

Brownie said: "What, you loud-mouthed little saddle-bum?"

"Number One," Jeff said: "Somewhere on this spread, you figure to come out way ahead. Just keepin' you in those fancy gloves costs more than the average gun-bully can afford."

"You're puny," Brownie said, "and mouthy. They're traits I don't like in a man. Anything else?"

"Number Two: I'm going to take you on. Get yourself ready for a beating. Take your gun off, and let's go outside."

"It's a pleasure," Brownie said. He unbuckled the gun, threw it behind the counter. He walked outside, heavy and swaggering on his bowed legs, bent down to unbuckle his spurs.

Jeff took off his own spurs, hung them on the limb of the sour orange tree in the plaza. He didn't feel scared. It was funny, but he didn't feel anything. Except this was a job to be done. He would have no sense of security in this new, this peaceful, life until Brownie was removed—

The big man was coming at him, moving in. A wrestler, Jeff judged. Not a boxer. A good wrestler, probably. Those arms could break a man's back—

Huge hands pawed for Jeff's shoulders, and he sidestepped. His fists felt competent and sure as they flicked over Brownie's guard and slashed at each cheekbone in turn. They didn't feel so competent as Brownie took the blows without flinching. The pain shot through Jeff's knuckles.

A hard man, deceptively hard!

Jeff back-pedaled away, the big man lumbering after him. Suddenly Jeff reversed, and came in fast. He feinted for the head, and when the guard went up, sank a fist in Brownie's stomach. Ah—

Brownie's wind came out with a rushing sound. Jeff landed one on the chin, without effort or visible result, except to give him another belly shot. Delighted, Jeff waded in. And then—

A boot caught him just behind the knee, a hand flicked at his shoulder, and he was tumbling across the plaza, adobe dust stinging his eyes.

Either he passed out for a moment or Brownie was faster than he had expected, because he had barely come to rest before the boots were pounding into his ribs.

Lights danced around inside his head, and there was a smell like ammonia in his nostrils, and he thought he was dead. He managed to roll over to protect his belly, and luck was with him. He hit Brownie when the gunman had one foot in the air.

Jeff shoved on the foot. Brownie, clumsy in his high-heeled boots, went down.

Jeff got up, staggering. There was a moment when he could have jumped and trampled Brownie, but he never knew whether chivalry or weariness stopped him. Anyway, it was too late almost at once. Brownie was up, and they were hurling themselves at each other again. Dust swirled high in the plaza.

Jeff was a good boxer. He had fought with Loren as a kid, and because he had lived and fought with big men before he encountered Brownie, he had had a lot of practice. The training helped him now, because his brain was no longer with him. Habit, conditioning, kept his guard up, his hands working, kept him searching for Brownie's stomach.

And then, suddenly, there was nothing to hit.

He staggered back against the sour orange tree, gasping for breath. All right. It was all right.

A thin, calm voice said: "Now, Brownie, don't. *Don't*, I said!" And a gun roared.

The mist shifted from Jeff's eyes, and he saw that the fight had not been over. He'd knocked Brownie down with the last that was in him, and then stopped, and that had been wrong, because Brownie had crawled to the grocery store and got his gun.

That was Rebel on the horse, Rebel with his gun out. "I jest fired in the air," he said, "in case Don Jeff, here, had closed your ears. Drop that belt, Brownie, and git. Git to yore hoss, and ride. I'll bring yore gun to you when you cools off."

"Thanks, Rebel."

"That is all right, Don Jeff. You done right well, son. I only wish Pecos coulda been here to see it. But then," said Rebel, "he'll make a point of followin' you around till the next time."

"Next time?"

"Surely. You think Brownie there is gonna take a beating like this?"

"I'm not," said Brownie. "And in the future, Texan, you'd better wear a gun. Because I'm going to act like you had one on, either way."

Chapter Eleven

JEFF dug deep into his bag and brought out the guns. Slowly, he buckled them on. He was ashamed to admit how good they felt, hanging low against his legs. At the end of thirty minutes they felt as natural as his boots.

Rebel's sharp eye caught it the first time the two of them met. "For a man," Rebel said, "who ain't much

for guns, you wear them mighty easy. An' for a cowman who never does nothin' but rope, those are mighty choice weapons."

"My father's," Jeff informed him. "He wore them all the time."

Rebel said: "Too bad he didn't teach you. It's a skill a man can use."

A few days went by. Brownie was still on the Buckster Ranch, Jeff knew. He heard the gunman's booming laugh on two or three occasions when the bunkhouse celebrated late at night. But either the beating Jeff had given him or orders from Mr. McReuben must have put some sense into the big man's head. Or perhaps some larger goal made Brownie willing to wait. His path and Jeff's did not cross again for a week.

John, the China-boy cook, brought Jeff's breakfast to his office; a cold lunch out of a saddle-bag was usually all the Texan had time for; and he ate his dinners at the big house. Staying out of the mess-hall probably helped him to avoid Brownie; certainly it did no harm.

Finishing his breakfast this morning, he shoved the cups and plates to one side, and bent over the map he had been a month working on. It was his pride, and it had taken some late hours. Spread out on the table before him were the twenty-two sections of the Buckster Ranch, and the twenty sections of sagebrush that the preëmptors had taken up.

Along the south edge was a washy blue area: the Pacific Ocean. Jeff always liked to look at this first, of a morning; it was a fancy touch he never would have thought of. One day when he'd been in Santa Monica mailing off another batch of water and soil samples to the State university at Davis, Lora Harriott had painted in the Pacific on his map.

Jeff grinned, running his finger over the blue streak. Then he filled the pipe he had learned how to smoke in the last month, and began sketching in the results of his last batch of reports.

Fingers that had been used to the lariat and branding iron were clumsy on crayon and pencil; but he worked away, smoke puffing out of his pipe. Alkaline soil received a crayoning of red cross-hatch, acid blue; alkaline springs were red, and acid blue circles. Anything alkaline enough to poison stock was supposed to get a large red mark, but the only spring he had found like that was deep in a cañon on the nester land. There was one field, marked solid green on the map, that was so acid it never would grow anything for the Bucksters except the more prickly forms of chaparral and cactus; but it was a small field.

A land of milk and honey. You couldn't grow citrus on it, the State

college had warned, because the alky springs precipitated solids when they hit the acid soil; and solids kill citrus. But then who wanted to plant oranges? No market for 'em, anyway.

PADEMONIUM broke loose in the mess-hall.

Jeff put down his pipe, jumped up from the table. He dashed out on the little office porch, running, his high-heeled boots loud on the boards. Then he had to stop, because Pecos was making his bay horse dance close to the office steps, crowding the animal in. "You gotta stay there," Pecos said. "Rebel told me to make you stay there."

"Get out of my way, kid," Jeff said.

Pecos snatched his gun loose with a flourish. "Now, Jeff," he said. "You don't want I should have to use this."

The noise in the mess-hall stopped, as quickly as it had started. Rebel's voice was clear in the silence. "An' that sticks for his hoss, his cat, his dog, an' his last year's pair of pants. Start anything with anything that belongs to him, an' you finish it with me. C'mon, Slim."

Jeff said: "You can put that gun away now, Pecos. . . . Tell me, kid, would you really have shot me?"

"I'd have let you have it if'n yo'd stepped down so much as one step," Pecos said. "Rebel told me to."

"I suppose your grandmother would like it when you went to jail."

"Aw, a fella's not a man till he's been in jail three times. Anyway, Mr. McReuben'd see they didn't keep me in no ol' jail house."

"Any old jail-house," Rebel said. He dropped off the black, tied his reins to the rail of Jeff's porch. "*Mañana*, Don Jeff. I hope we find you flourish-ing."

"Come on in, Rebel. What's the trouble at the mess-hall?"

The old man stamped up on the porch, saying: "Come on in, Pecos. . . . Why, nothin' serious, suh, nothing at all. Mr. McReuben asked me to give you his compliments, and will you wait for him this mawnin'?"

"Sure. I'm still tied to my desk, anyway. Rebel, what was the trouble?"

"The night crew—only they ain't the night crew any more—was actin' up a little," Rebel said. "I took it on me to calm them down, that bein' as good a way as any to settle mah stomach after breakfast."

"How come you told Pecos here not to let me mix in it?"

"Did I say that, Pecos?" The blue eyes were wide above the whiskers. The old man shoved his black hat back on his forehead. "Hush mah mouf!" Rebel said. "But I sure am gettin' absent-minded. Now, why could I have said a thing like that?"

D. J. Marks came up on the porch. Whatever the trouble had been, he had been in it. There was the beginning of a bruise on his right cheekbone, and his left ear was suspiciously pink. There was no doubt that he was the "Slim" that Rebel had been talking to.

Jeff said: "Hi, D. J. Come on over to the map and—"

Marks said: "I'm quittin'."

"Yes?" Jeff nodded. "All right. I'll give you a slip for your time, and Mr. McReuben will pay you off. You might tell me why, though."

D. J. shook his head. "Jus' time to be movin' along."

Pecos said: "The rannies call him a sod-buster. They give him a li'l ol' tin pail an' a shovel this mawnin'."

"I told you—" Rebel began, but Jeff wasn't listening.

"I haven't asked you to do any hoeing, or plowing," Jeff said. "I'm not trying to make a farmer out of you. But if you want to quit, D. J., go on, and no hard feelings. Let's see, this is the twelfth; you've got—"

"You been decent to me," Marks said. "You're all right, Don Jeff. I don't believe what the hands are sayin' about you."

"If'n yo're quittin', quit," Rebel said. "Don't stand around makin' speeches."

"Let him talk, Rebel," Jeff said. "He's got my curiosity aroused, like you say in Virginia."

"Now, by golly—"

"The men say yo're plannin' to farm this place," D. J. said. "They say yo're a-fixin' to run them off an' put in hoe-men here."

"No," Jeff said. "This is cattle land."

"Then why you been sendin' Slim here around bringing you chunks of dirt?" Pecos asked. "That's no way to run a cow-spread. That's hoe-man stuff."

Jeff said: "Rebel's been bringing you over here every morning for a week, and I've tried to explain to you what I'm doing, Pecos. We're going to plow some, sure. Maybe a twentieth or less of the whole ranch. For winter hay to shovel out to the cattle. But—"

"You'll spile the place," Pecos said. "I don't see any sense in it. It's gonna be my place sometime, an'—"

"Maybe it won't," Jeff said. "Grow up, Pecos. If the place won't pay for itself, the mortgage will eat it before you ever come of age."

"The mortgage ain't et it yet," Pecos said.

"You used to have the sagebrush land to winter on while your good fields got a start. That's gone now."

"Sure," Pecos said. "Sure. If'n you'd minded your own business, Brownie an' the riders would'a run

them nesters out a long time ago. Only you hadda come in with your ideas and yore book-larnin'. You're sweet on that nester-nurse, that's what it is. An' you want Mr. McReuben's job, too. Well—"

Rebel said: "Now, that's enough, milky. You be quiet, an' show some decent respect for an elder. Jeff, I—"

Jeff said: "While my dander is up, Rebel, I might as well have a fight with you too. From what I heard this morning, and from the easy way things have been going for me, I got me grave suspicions that you've been shielding my name around here. I'm not Pecos, Rebel. I'm big enough to look after myself."

Rebel grinned. "Say it's the fine old name of Jefferson, which you got no right to bear, bein's how yore daddy come from Illinois. Or jes' say I run fresh out of trouble myself, an' set out to borrow some. But—"

Nobody heard Mr. McReuben come in. His low voice cut through the din. "Since when has the Buckster Ranch been able to afford four men fighting with each other? Don't any of you have anything better to do?"

Jeff gulped, forcing his anger down. But it stayed inside him and curdled there, like a lump in the pit of his stomach. "Sorry," he muttered. He ran his hand through his hair. "Slim Marks, here, wants to quit, Mr. McReuben. We owe him about ten dollars."

The segundo nodded. He reached in his pocket and threw a pile of silver dollars on the table. "Ten," he said. "That's your horse you ride, or a Buckster?"

"Buckster," Marks said.

"Then you'll want a ride into town. The buckboard's going right after lunch. Here's a note to the driver." Mr. McReuben scribbled, threw the sheet of paper to D. J. "*Adios*."

"*Vaya con dios*, Mr. McReuben," Marks gulped. "Don Jeff, I'm sorry. You been right good to me, accordin' to your lights."

"All right, D. J. So long."

"Don't take any wooden nickels, Don Jeff." The puncher put his silver in his pocket, and went away, jingling as he walked.

"WHAT was it?" Mr. McReuben asked. "The other punchers makin' fun of him for digging up little pieces of dirt?"

Jeff nodded.

"You can't make a scientific rancher out of a cowpoke, Jeff. . . . Oh, some mail. It was just marked Buckster Ranch, and I opened it."

"Water analysis?"

"Yes," Mr. McReuben said. "You thinking of quitting too, Jeff? This water's from Santa Susanna, clear the other side of the San Fernando."

"Yes," Jeff said. "I asked the college at Davis to get me that. I needed it." He looked at the map, at the pretty blue ocean painted on it. Suddenly he cleared his throat again. He felt tired, stuffy. "Rebel, I want to apologize for anything I said."

Rebel grinned under his whiskers. "Why, Jeff, boy, that's all right. From the easy way you act about Brownie, I assume you have put him down as a bully who runs to very little brains."

"No," Jeff said slowly. "He's tough, and he's smart. He doesn't belong here, passing himself off as a two-bit gunman."

Rebel grinned again. "That is right discernin' on yore part, Jefferson. It took Mr. McReuben and myself several months to learn that Brownie is 'Cunard' Brown, an oceanic gambler."

MR. McREUBEN said: "Why he's here, instead of plying his trade of fleecing travelers, is no concern of ours. He does his job, and that's all I ask of any man."

"I like to know why people do things," Jeff said. "But Rebel, I really am sorry for all that talk about being able to take care of myself."

"I have forgotten it, Jefferson. When you know you're the toughest *hombre* on the spread, you don't take offense easy." He stretched his long and bony frame until his beard pointed at the ceiling. "C'mon, Pecos, let's see can we stir up trouble elsewhere. Be seein' you, gents." He led his pupil down to their horses.

Before the sound of the hoofs had died away, Mr. McReuben said: "The old boy likes you, Jeff."

"He's a good man," Jeff said. He looked at the map. "I don't exactly cotton to the idea of everybody thinking I'm scared of guns, though."

"It was your idea to run the ranch from a desk. A man can't be everything," Mr. McReuben said. "Anyway, I'm not carrying Brownie's crew much longer."

"How's that?"

"We've moved all the cattle we can afford to move. What's left of the old stock goes into town to be sold, and there's the end of it."

"We'll need more she-stuff to—"

"We're out of *dinero*, Jeff, till you get the ranch going on the new basis. Those lawyers cost plenty. I'm glad I checked the ranching end to you, boy. I'm having enough trouble with the highwaymen."

"Highwaymen?"

"The State highway commission wants to put in a coast highway between Santa Monica and Santa Barbara. They're trying to condemn a strip of Buckster land an acre deep from the edge of sand."

"They'd pay for it?"

"Sure," Mr. McReuben said. "Of course. But Mrs. Buckster doesn't want to be cut off from the sea. Eventually, she plans to build a break-water and have a harbor. . . . Oh, by the way, Jeff, I am getting the hang of how you work this soil-and-water thing. Our water comes down from the Santa Susannas, goes under the San Fernando Valley, and rises in springs here—that's it, isn't it?"

"That's one way it could go. Or maybe it doesn't, and all we get is surface water, seepage from the sagebrush hills behind us. I've got to know."

"Water's water," Mr. McReuben said. "Wherever it comes from. I don't see it matters. When can I expect your report?"

"Pretty soon," Jeff said. He watched the *segundo* ride away. It was like Mr. McReuben to turn a thing over completely, to have complete confidence in a man or none at all.

He sat down at his desk. Desk-rancher. Let Brownie and his men yell, and whoop and pull their guns, you could run a ranch without shooting out nesters. You—

He opened the water analysis. The fear that had been riding him all along, all the last few days, made the letters tremble a little as he unfolded the sheets. *Analyses of Water Specimens taken along Santa Susanna Range by L.A. County engineers. Range so-and-so, Township so-and-so—*

He went to work at the table, puffing the pipe, playing it out as long as possible. *NaCo, trace. Sulphur, pos.*

The conclusion was inescapable. What Santa Susanna water rose in the Santa Monicas rose high, near the crestline, and, having risen, disappeared again. The Buckster ranch was dependent on seepage.

And seepage would disappear entirely if the nester land was plowed and planted. The water necessary for the Buckster cattle—and what would have been the Buckster crop—would go into nester wheat, until that broke up the adobe, and then the whole thing would go into dust—as New Mexico had done.

And he had persuaded the ranch to let the gunmen go and leave the nesters to face the impossibility of their situation in time.

Only now he knew they couldn't wait on time. Nature—geology—had crossed him up.

Down at the bunkhouse Brownie's crew was getting ready for another cattle drive. Taking the grades out to make way for science. It was not too late. They still had the guns, and what Mr. McReuben had planned to do by instinct, Jeff could now prove had to be done for science.

Drive 'em out, force 'em out, harass 'em out. And then, if the law made

any fuss, use science to back up what you had to do.

Not wait for the law that took so long, as he and Loren had done.

He heard the horses outside and dragged himself to the door. Harvey Smith and—Lora Harriott.

They nearly fell off their horses, came into the office in a rush. "I've come to apologize, Jeff," Harvey Smith said. "Miss Harriott said all along you was all right, but me, I had my doubts." He wiped his palm on his trouser leg. "Shake."

Jeff shook. He looked from one to the other.

Lora Harriott smiled. "I want to apologize too, Jeff. I—think you're wonderful, fine. Mrs. Buckster told us. Brownie and his men are going the middle of the month, in three days. And you did it. You're going to give the preëmptors a chance."

Smith's voice was earnest. "And if them gun-thugs don't want to go, Jeff, you let us squatters know, and we'll give you a hand."

"Sure," Jeff said. "Sure. Harvey, how's the plowing coming?"

"Good, Don Jeff, good. We're breakin' five acres a day. Say, you want to come up to a meetin' at the schoolhouse tomorrow night? The settlers ought to meet you. Sort of inaugurate a new era."

Jeff said: "Well—"

"Please do," Lora said. "I—it would make me happy."

Harvey Smith looked uncomfortable, as if he were jealous and ashamed of being so.

"I'll be there, then," Jeff said.

Smith said: "Well, I gotta go to town an' get some seedlin' potatoes."

"How're you getting them started," Jeff asked, "without water?"

"Some of the spring streams're still runnin'. Where we kin, we throw up mud dams an' ditch that over the seedlin's. Where we can't, we haul water."

"Tough way to make a living."

"Yeah, but we're provin' on our land all the time. So long, Jeff, and we do thank you."

"HURRY back." Jeff listened to the man go out, listened to the clumping noise of his plowhorse going toward town. But his eyes were on the map. There was a bitter taste in his mouth. He had thrown his saddle on science, and science had turned and bitten him.

He said: "One of the troubles with being a swivel-chair cowman is you never get to look at a cow. You workin', or can you and Nadita go for a ride with me?"

"I'd love to. My only call this morning was up at the big house: one of the maids slipped and sprained her wrist. I've taken care of that."

Chapter Twelve

ONCE in a saddle, rocking west on Mariposa's golden back, Jeff's cares fell away. Stumped or not stumped, he was Jeff Decker, and he'd find a way out of what looked like a box cañon. He said: "I see you're a highly moral girl."

"How's that?" Lora asked. She looked particularly fine this morning on the pinto's back.

"In Texas, when a girl holds her reins in her left hand like a man, we say she's not worth ridin' with. How you gonna hold hands with a girl when she's got the reins on your side?"

Lora laughed, and shifted her lines to her right hand. He reached for her left. She kicked the spurs to Nadita, and the little pinto shot away. Jeff said: "Come on, Mariposa, you can get them." And the palomino, happy to be out after all her time in the corral, picked up speed like an express train.

Lora was a good and agile rider for an Eastern gal. She twisted the spotted horse in and out among clumps of greasewood and scrub-oak, once dropped flat to her saddle and went under the red limbs of a manzanita. Jeff had to detour; the tree was low enough to catch Mariposa's tall saddlehorn.

Sweat darkened Mariposa's neck before Nadita refused to go through a patch of wild lilac, and Jeff caught up and cornered the girl.

Reaching for her hand, he got it, dropped his reins over the pelican horn and used his left hand to start to peel off Lora's white buckskin gauntlet. The girl was laughing so hard she couldn't protest.

From just behind Jeff—so close that he jumped and dropped Lora's glove

to the ground—Rebel's soft voice drawled: "Now, Pecos, there's a lesson for you. If you want to co't a gal, jes' treat her like she was a snaky cow. Jes' co'ner her."

Jeff whirled, snatching his rope loose. He flung it in a wide loop, clutching the honda, trying to rope Rebel, California style.

Rebel promptly held his stiff riding crop over his head, and the rope was deflected and flung to the ground. "That's an old one," Rebel said. "You gotta think up something new to catch an old fox like me. Reckless, ain't he, Pecos? Lady, you need rescuing?"

"I'm glad to see you, Captain Beecham. If you hadn't come along, I don't know what would have happened."

"I do," Rebel said, "unless times has changed considerable since I was a boy on the plantation. But you better mend your ways, young Decker. The segundo's coming up."

The big sorrel danced among them. "Seems like I can't get anybody to work on this *estancia* any more," Mr. McReuben said.

"Oh, Mr. McReuben," Lora greeted him. "It's my fault. Isn't it wonderful Jeff figured all our troubles out? I want to apologize for anything I thought or said about you. You're not like other cowmen, Mr. McReuben. When you saw a peaceful way

out, you took it, and—you'll be happier here, Mr. McReuben, when that awful Brownie's gone."

The little man seemed to sit straighter in the saddle. "Who told you that?"

"Mrs. Buckster."

The segundo slumped. "I hope you haven't told anyone, but I can see by your face that you have. It's too bad. You don't get rid of a Brownie by paying him off, like Slim Marks."

Pecos cried: "We gonna run Brownie off? Me an' Rebel?"

"I thought Brownie was your friend!" the segundo said.

"Yeah, but I never saw no real honest-to-gosh gunman get run off the ranch. Oh, boy, we'll have fun, huh, Rebel?"

"If there's any runnin' to be done, milky-mouth, I'll do it some night after you're in bed."

Pecos lipped a twig and said: "You're feelin' awful perky today, you old windbag. I hope you don't meet that skeercrow in the blue suit again."

"He's got you there, Rebel," Mr. McReuben said, judiciously.

"Sho he has, sho he has," Rebel said. "Suh," he said to Jeff, "afore the young scion here tells you about it, allow me to do a good story real justice. About six months ago, I was down in Venice giving a great occasion its proper anniversary celebration."

There was nothing in his voice to show how angry he was. "I'm sorry I had to do that, but you-all were getting out of hand."



"I never heard this particular phase of it," Mr. McReuben said. "Just what was the great occasion, Rebel?"

"It doesn't really matteh, Don Segundo. It was either the birthday of one of our Confederate generals, or a battle date. Perhaps," Rebel said dreamily, "it was Chancellorsville. Yes suh, I think it was. I distinctly remembelh Chancellorsville comin' into the conversation. Well, Jeff, I was fortunate enough to run into a fellow-warrior, a Kentuckian who had ridden with Morgan. Not bein' the successful bullet-dodger I was, this Kentucky gentleman carried with him, situated somewhere near his floatin' ribs, a ball or so of Union shrapnel. You will understand that his granddaughter, with whom he lived, guarded his health a bit more zealously than was to the old warrior's taste. This was the first time in months he had escaped her fond but constrainin' influence."

"In other words," Pecos cut in, "these two old crocks got drunk together."

"Gentlemen, hush!" Rebel said. He bent from the saddle, and picked a mariposa lily from the side of the road. He tucked this behind his left ear, patted the high black jumping horse, and went on with his story. "It was not so much a drinkin' experience, as a matteh of scientific inquiry; the Kentuckian, naturally, favoring bourbon, and I, as a Tidewater man, bein' a rye drinker by conviction and inheritance. I do remember a third party, perhaps the bartender, who maintained that we could no longer tell which was which, but he was a rude man, of inferior breedin'. Closin' time found us near the Veterans' Home in Sawtelle; I loaned my Kentucky friend my left-hand gun, and I was usin' my right one to shoot out the street lamps. As a Texan, suh, and as an honest taxpayer, you will see the waste of public money involved in providin' lights for G.A.R. men who kaint read, anyway. . . .

"Thereafter there were a certain amount of policemen, of one denomination or another; Sherman, Santy Monica, Los Angeles and, I do believe, a Federal guard or so from the hospital itself were represented in the delegation. . . . My noble friend, fearless in the face of the bluecoats—whatever their allegiance—bethought himself of his granddatter, and pressin' mah gun back into mah hyand, faded into the night, to be seen no more."

REBEL paused to point. "Right there's the ranch line, the top of that hill . . . to resume. Shenandoah, here, decided the time had come to go home. Like the well-trained steed and loyal friend he is, he came ragin' and

roarin' into the fray, and I leaped on his back and was gone. By dint of goin' daown the wall of Santy Monica Cañon, and through a few backyards, I shook the law off mah heels, and started up the beach."

Mr. McReuben said: "Go on with the story. But we might as well ride over this way. I told Mike to move some heifers."

"Yes suh. Comin' down the cañon, I decided to reload. What was mah chagrin, when I found my Kentucky friend had gone home with a pocketful of cyartridges. I had barely enough left to reload one gun, my right-sider. Just as I was putting the empty gun sadly away on my near side, I found myself surrounded. It was about a quarteh of a mile up Santy Monica Cañon; there was an aged but erect Union man theah, with the drop on me. Suh, I had no choice, though a peaceful man by nature; I expended mah last four shells on him, jumped Shenandoah over the poor corpus, and came home at a dead run."

"Lucky he didn't founde the horse," Mr. McReuben said. . . . "Found something, Jeff?"

"I don't know. Go on, Rebel." Jeff had got off Mariposa, was feeling at the base of a patch of tule reeds.

"Oh," said Mr. McReuben, "I go on from here. I woke up about three in the morning and heard someone rifling my medicine chest. I nearly shot a hole through the old drunkard. . . . He was looking for my razor. He wanted to shave and disguise himself, on the belief and understanding that he had killed a policeman."

"By that time," Rebel said with dignity, "I was naturally sober enough to realize that it could not have been a Union man; none of the veterans could have got there that fast."

Mr. McReuben said: "I'm a good-natured man; I went into town in the morning to see just what warrants were out against him, and who I had to see to fix them. Admitting that there was some righteous indignation at the breaking of the peace in Sawtelle, it was nothing to the screams of the Jap market gardener in the cañon whose scarecrow had been completely demolished."

Pecos roared with laughter. "A scarecrow!" he said. "Rebel put four bullets into a scarecrow!"

"I will admit that the incident has its amusing side," Rebel said. He combed his whiskers aside, and spat tobacco juice. "What you up to, Jeff?"

Jeff was still squatting on his heels, his fingers feeling among the tall reeds, down near the base. He stood up, wiping his dusty fingers on his denim pants. "The water in this draw's gone underground."

"Sure," Mr. McReuben said. His bright eyes watched Jeff intently. "It

often does. Another stream down the range a mile or so is gone too; that's why I'm having the heifers moved."

Jeff pointed. "There's a good stand of sycamores downhill from here. Sycamores don't grow where they can't get water all year around within thirty feet."

MR. McREUBEN stepped off the sorrel deftly, walked over. "What you leading to, Jeff?"

"This is just the beginning of June. If the water's underground now, it'll be a lot more than thirty feet deep before it rains again. Those sycamores aren't used to that, or they'd be dead. Was it an unusually dry winter?"

"You know it wasn't. You've got the reports. Speak up."

"It's the plowing that's doing it," Jeff said. "The nesters' plowing." He did not look at Lora. "I suspected it. That's why I sent for those water reports from the Santa Susanna. This isn't spring water at all; it's seepage."

Lora cried: "Oh, Jeff! You're worse than Brownie. You did this on purpose. To get Harvey and the other settlers off guard. You—"

"No," he said. "It was an accident. Otherwise I wouldn't say this in front of you. A mistake—"

"Then we don't let Brownie go," Mr. McReuben said. "We turn him loose."

"No," Lora cried. "No!"

The little segundo said: "Miss Harriott, this is Buckster Ranch business."

Jeff said: "You can have my job, of course. I—"

Mr. McReuben said: "Only one man can make mistakes on this ranch. That's me. I am segundo. Was everything else you told us wrong?"

"No," Jeff said, "it wasn't. Scientific ranching would pay here. You still ought to plow a lot of this downhill stuff for winter feed. You still—"

"All right," Mr. McReuben said. "I hire the men on this ranch. When they make mistakes, I pay for them. Miss Harriott, I wish to talk to my men here—"

"No," the girl said. "No. I won't go away. I know what you're going to say; I know you're going to tell them to get Brownie and go back to what you were doing before Jeff stopped you. I won't let you. This is the Twentieth Century, not the Dark Ages. You can't kill people because they stand in the way of your kingdom by the sea. You can't. In town they say the State's willing to pay you good money for this right-of-way through here. Buy the settlers out with that, why don't you?"

Mr. McReuben said: "It is very lucky for you that you're a woman. Mrs. Buckster does not wish to give up her access to the sea. It is part of her plans."

"Oh, but she's old; she doesn't—"

"Lora," Jeff said, "be quiet." He turned and faced Mr. McReuben. "Listen," he said, "do I get another chance?"

"I'll have to know your plans."

"You told me Brownie and his crew cost six hundred dollars a month. I get another hundred. They couldn't get the nesters out in less than three months."

"No. No, since you stopped them all, the good they've done is wasted."

"Good?" Lora asked. "Evil. Horror—not good."

"Lora," Jeff said again. "Here's my plan, Mr. McReuben. Don't do anything till tomorrow night. Then let me go up to this meeting they are having—Harvey Smith already invited me—and see if I can't buy them out for two thousand dollars. That will pay them for what they've done and give them a new start some place else."

Mr. McReuben said: "When I back a man, I back him all the way. Go to it. Try it."

Pecos said: "You better let me and Rebel go with you. Them nesters kin be pizen mean when they want to."

Mr. McReuben said: "Not you. Rebel goes, but not you, Pecos. . . . I'm going your way, Miss Harriott." His eyes held her, and when the sorrel started down the trail to the Mexican village and the homestead, the pinto went along.

"Mr. McReuben's for you, Jeff," Rebel said.

"Yeah, sure," Jeff said. He shoved his hat back on his head, rubbed his fingers through his hair. "Only—sometimes I get the feeling it's not me doing anything; it's Mr. McReuben doing it for me."

"He's segundo," Rebel said. "He calls the turns on this rancho." He spat, picked up the reins. "Sun's still shining; it's still a nice day. Tomorrow night's tomorrow night. When you live as long as I have, you learn to take one day at a time."

Chapter Thirteen

CHINESE JOHN said: "You eatum good supper?"

Jeff leaned back from the desk. "John, if Mrs. Buckster knew how you cook, we'd lose you; they'd have you cooking up at the big house."

"No cook foh ol' lady; you mally Miss Halliott, cook foh you ally-time."

"Well, I don't see how she can turn me down, now. She's got herself a farmer, though."

"You ask'm segundo," John said, avoiding Mr. McReuben's name, "how about job, now Blownie goin'?"

"So you know it too," Jeff said. He took out his pipe, started to fill it.

"Know evehthing," John asserted. "Know you go out moonlight night withoutem Don Lebel, Blownie alla same blow hell outa you. You no mally Miss Halliott, you mally ally-same damn undehtakeh." He took up the tray and went out.

"Makes sense," Jeff muttered to the Oriental back. He stood up, pulled on his blue serge coat. He got out his guns, trying to find some place to carry them so they wouldn't bulk or show. He didn't want to wear them to the homesteaders' meeting.

Rebel arrived before he had reached any sort of solution. The buggy wheels gritted back and forth in front of the office steps as the Hambletonian horse moved restlessly; Rebel called: "You better come on, Don Jeff. This hoss will have to work some before he'll stand."

Jeff put on his hat and went out. Rebel was resplendent in a freshly pressed gray outfit; a silver-studded belt with two guns shone on his waist. "Climb in, Jefferson, climb in."

"Why did you take that horse, Rebel? He'll never stay hitched to a rail during the meeting."

Rebel raised his hands, and the long-legged trotter shot up the road. "Why, he'll be company for me." He pulled on the rubber-gripped lines. "I don't plan to attend the convention; I'm duly constituted as a yard guard."

"Oh, the nesters aren't likely to start anything, Rebel. They're good people."

"That's as may be, son. Though, you start callin' 'em nesters, they may not stay good. But it is Brownie that concerns me. Everybody else on this *estancia* seems to have been informed about his imminent departure; but he just goes on, cheerfully fulfilling his duties. Look at this."

Transferring the lines to one hand for a minute—a dangerous procedure with the trotter clipping off the rough miles as though he were on a race-track—Rebel fished a piece of paper out of his pocket and handed it over.

It was light enough to read, though not light enough, Jeff thought, to be trying to break the two-minute mark. The paper read:

Pass 2 men. Thos. N. Brown, Esq.

"Naturally," Rebel said, "I didn't ask him for that; he volunteered it. You can't exactly say I need it."

"Maybe he's trying to calm down," Jeff said. "Maybe he likes the job. Then too, he may be wanted everywhere else."

"You might be makin' sense, Jeff. Gawd knows they've nearly crowded us old-timers into the Pacific as it is. . . . Get the gate, will you?"

Jeff opened the gate, and they were on nester land. They rolled on up through Harvey Smith's acres, and his

neighbors', and then they were at the schoolyard. It was just five minutes of eight. Rebel cramped the buggy up to the rail, and unbuckled his silver belt. "I'm trying to grow up," he said. "No use lettin' 'em see I'm armed."

Jeff grinned and stepped into the circle of light made by the lamps inside the schoolhouse windows. He looked himself up and down and grinned approval. He had dressed carefully so as to give himself no look of the cowpuncher. He was wearing the blue serge suit again, and low-heeled shoes. He couldn't do much about his bow legs, or his hat, since he had no hat but the Texas style Stetson. Still, even homesteaders wore big hats in the West.

THE schoolhouse was nearly full, with big men sitting at the little desks, their knees cramped under the edges, looking strangely meek and subdued. Harvey Smith, Lora Harriott and a man Jeff didn't know were on the platform. Jeff smiled at the girl and went up to join her.

"Mr. Decker," Lora said, "may I introduce Mr. Coxon, the land agent?"

Jeff shook hands with the man, sat down next to Lora. "See," he whispered to her, "things are going to be all right, now. I told you I'd iron them out. See? A nice peaceful meeting."

Harvey Smith was now standing behind the teacher's desk. He rapped on it with a little wooden hammer. "I hope you folks think it's all right for me to preside," he said. "As nobody else has offered, I figure I might as well. If you want someone else, just say so. . . . No? Well, then, the purpose of this meeting is to listen to Mr. Jeff Decker, who is an agricultural expert from Texas who has been making a study of the land we are homesteading. Mr. Decker works for our good friends the Buckster Ranch, and I'm going to let him tell you himself what he has in mind." Mr. Smith sat down.

Smith's ordered, preliminary speech was in the greatest contrast to the rough, defiant way he had spoken to Jeff in the field a month before. Jeff, in his new awareness, realized that that was right, too. A meeting was a meeting. You could be sure that tonight, from New England Common Councils to Oregon School Boards, a thousand, ten thousand, groups of common Americans were holding meetings like this. And in each of them would be people ready to swap punches any time they met on the street; but during the meeting, while they were actually in the schoolhouse or the town hall, they would be polite.

Jeff Decker got to his feet and faced the preëmptors. He said: "Gentle-

men, Mr. Smith is taking in a little too much land when he says I'm an agricultural expert. I'm not. I'm a ranchman, born in the sagebrush country of Texas, and I've worked on ranches all my life. I have had two years of scientific ranching and farming at Texas A. & M." Jeff said, and paused. He seemed to be getting along all right, he thought. They were listening.

"My home range," said Jeff, "is pretty much like this. Sagebrush and chaparral without much rain. So—I've been makin' a study of you-all's quarter sections. And my finding is, any of you who thinks he's preempted farm land, is wrong. You can't plow that 'dobe.'"

"Mister," a voice said, "we done it." There was laughter—and, that was good, because the tone of the meeting was growing restless, angry.

Jeff laughed, too, but he did not feel like laughing. He wanted more than anything in the world to convince these people without a fight; he wished that he could be William Jennings Bryan for an hour, and talk them around—but he wasn't. He was just a cowman, talking business. Well, tell them that. "Neighbors," he said. "I know how you feel. I am not a rich man. I've ridden the range for my thirty and beans, and I know how it is when a man puts himself down on a hundred and sixty acres. You don't want to move again. But—this is cattle country. And most of you men are wheat men."

"One of the biggest wheat-fields in the country's just over the range from us." That was the same voice.

"Right for you," Jeff said. "In a valley—with mountains on either side! Seepage'll grow you wheat in a place like that. On a slope like you-all's, seepage will plumb disappear if you plant. The run-off'll take your seeds away."

A hand shot up. Mr. Smith said: "Mr. Decker has the floor."

Jeff said: "I'll be glad to answer questions."

"All right, then," Mr. Smith said. "Mr. Lonan has the floor."

MR. LONAN was about fifty, with the spreading shoulders and somewhat stooped hips of a plowman. He said: "You say we're wheat-growers, and you're right. I don't see what a cattleman can tell us about wheat-growing that's worth our time on a week night. I move the meeting adjourn."

A chorus of, "Second the motion!" gave Jeff a pretty good idea of what he was up against.

He put up his own hand. "Wait a minute," he cried. "Wait, will you? Have you ever any of you worked adobe? Sure, you can plow it, if you got oxen, or put enough horses on

your plow." There was no use telling them that they could have plowed a lot easier a few weeks ago. "But after you plow it, you gotta cultivate by hand. You gotta go down the rows with a hoe and bang each clod to bits. You gotta put in sand and manure, and if you don't do it right, you're just makin' 'dobe bricks." His English was slipping down to bunkhouse, but it didn't matter. "Five acres a family, for a garden and some feed, that would be fine. And the rest of your land for graze."

Mr. Lonan's fierce old face twisted up. "Sho. And starve to death. This sage'll carry four cows to the quarter section."

"If you grow winter feed on your five," Jeff said, "you can run it up to about twelve prime steers, more or less. Take it as a standard, you can put on about thirty-five hundred pounds of fat a year."

"What's cattle selling at?" Mr. Smith asked. "We ought to know that."

"Around eight, up and down," Jeff said.

The land agent on the platform said: "That would be about two hundred and fifty dollars a year profit."

Mr. Lonan screeched: "In the Middle West, a hundred dollars an acre a year's all right for grain land. This is Californy, where things grow rank. You askin' us to give that up for your miserable chicken feed?"

Jeff said: "Good God, do you expect to make sixteen thousand dollars a year off homestead land?"

"We ain't going to sit here and listen to some low-living cowpuncher blaspheme," a new voice cried. "Mr. Chairman, adjourn the meeting."

"Wait a minute," Jeff called desperately. "Wait, will you?" His voice carried, dominated them for a minute. "If the land was that good, if you could make that much, don't you think the big people around here would have done it? Use your heads."

A heckler yelled: "Bucksters don't want nobody else to 'mount to nothing but themselves."

Jeff said: "I don't care about that. You hear me? I came to make a proposal."

"Make it and shut up, then," Mr. Lonan said.

Mr. Smith rapped for order. "Mr. Decker, I am sorry that this meeting got out of hand. Now, neighbors, sit down—hear Mr. Decker's proposal."

They subsided, rebelliously. Jeff said: "Name an agricultural expert you trust; have him go over the land, like I did. And then, if he tells the truth, the Buckster Ranch will buy your claims from you, and help you take up some other place."

They started to yell again, but Harvey Smith rapped them down.

"This is an orderly meeting," he said. "You heard Mr. Decker's proposal. Anybody want to put it to a vote?"

"Naw," Lonan said. "We don't need any agrycultural expert. We're dirt farmers. And any expert we hired, the Bucksters would bribe away. Is anybody in favor of Mr. Cowboy's proposal?"

There was a chorus of noes, with a few parliamentary-minded nays. The farmers began to get up.

"Move the meeting adjourn," Mr. Lonan said. "We gotta get up early to plow."

Jeff bawled: "All right. But you can't fight—"

HE had meant to say that they couldn't fight nature, but it was an unfortunate remark. They began screaming: "Can't we?" and "We'll show you," and there was a surge toward the platform. Harvey's gavel was of no use.

Jeff clenched his fists and got ready. Rebel was right, a bunch of fool hoe-men, a parcel of pig-headed dirt farmers. Well, one puncher could lick ten homesteaders, and—

A gun roared outside. They forgot about Jeff, and turned to the door. Rebel was standing there. He had rebuckled the silver belt.

There was nothing in his voice or in his bearing to show how angry he was; just the slight flaring of the nostrils on his high-bridged nose. He said: "I'm sorry I had to do that, but you-all were getting out of hand. Jeff Decker there came to make you a peaceable proposal; but me, I came along to see you took it peaceful. You-all know me. And there ain't one of you will stand up and and say what he's thinkin' of me, either."

"Move the meeting be adjourned," Lonan said.

Rebel said: "It's your meeting. You can adjourn it or not adjourn it, jes' as you please. Jeff Decker was tryin' to help you, but you don't have to take his help; he's the best friend you ever had, but you ain't got sense enough to know it. You better listen to him; if he can't handle you, the next man may not talk first."

Lonan faced the Virginian. There was not a lot of difference in their years. "I'm old enough to remember when Kansas was cattle-land. We run you gun-thugs and proud riders outa Kansas, and we made the ol' State one of the purtiest wheat lands you ever see. An' we'll do it ag'in."

There was a chorus of wild yells.

Jeff said: "All right, Mr. Lonan, and why are you here, then?"

"My land played out on me. But afore it did, I sure harvested me some pretty wheat."

"You'll have the same story here, then," Jeff said. "You'll get you two



"Were you anyone else, I'd resent that, Jefferson. Let us pretend that you did not say it."

harvests, sure. One harvest of wheat and one of mortgages. And one'll eat the other. And then the land will be no good."

"That's our lookout, son. And not you nor all the gun-thugs you can hire are gonna stop us makin' a good honest try."

Jeff threw up his hands. "Can't you even read? Read your weather statistics. Most years you get one month of gully-washers and nine months of drought here. You can't grow wheat with that."

"We kin try. And if that gun-totin' old Secessionist there doesn't stand out of our way, we'll run him down."

Rebel said: "I'm out of your way. I don't need your company." He stepped aside.

Harvey Smith faced Jeff for a minute. "I'd like to cut off my right hand," he said. "The one that shook yours today." With Lora on his arm, he went out after the other nesters.

Jeff saw Rebel try to stop Lora, saw her brush the old man's hand away.

The land agent said: "It's too bad. That was a fair offer."

"Couldn't you have told them?"

The agent shrugged. "I'm not supposed to. I'm here to see they don't stay off their homesteads more than five months in the year, that they get their lines right. I'll answer questions they ask me, but anything else would be Government interference. Anyway, it's the Government's fault. They ought to let these people take

out full sections, run small cattle ranches."

"Well, why don't they, then?"

"Mister, don't get mad at me. These men want farms, not ranches. And anyway, I'm neither the President nor Congress. Good night, Decker. Glad to have met you."

He went out the door Lora had used a minute before. Jeff waited; he didn't want to talk to anybody. Finally he went out into the yard, deserted except for Rebel, and climbed into the high-wheeled cart.

Rebel cramped the wheels around, and they started back for the ranch.

"It's too bad," Rebel said after a while. "You made sense to me. But hoe-men haven't got any sense, or they wouldn't be hoe-men. Well, I guess this means Brownie's with us some longer."

"Yes," Jeff said. "I guess it does."

Chapter Fourteen

THIS was June, and the fog should have been gone. But it came on again the next morning, blanketing the Pacific, creeping into Jeff's cabin, taking the gold out of Mariposa's coat when he went back to tend her.

He had given her fresh water, hay and grain when the hand arrived to tend her; it was the rider named Mike, who had been one of the ones to meet Jeff in Los Angeles. Jeff was clean-

ing away with the brush. He said: "Hi, Mike."

Mike extracted a handsome gold watch from his left pocket, snapped the cover open. "I'm on time," he said. "I ain't late."

"No. You're on time, Mike. It's all right, go get your chuck. I can take care of my mare."

"Don Jeff, if I ain't been cleanin' her right—"

Jeff rested the brush and currycomb on the corral rail. "You've been doing fine. Say, that's a good-looking watch you have there."

The cowhand grinned. "Ain't it?" He took it out of his pocket, handed it over. It weighed about as much as a mule shoe. "Bought it up in Oklahoma, onc't. Me an' Red was workin' for a land-shark in the rush up there, holdin' down quarter-sections. Didn't get to town for three months."

Long experience with the breed filled in the gaps. "You gave three months' pay for a watch?"

"Well, I saved out enough for one good bust." Mike whistled in remembrance. "What a head I had on me the next morning! I saved out ten bucks, an' Red blew his whole pay."

"Lucky you still had the watch."

"I'd left it with the jeweler to have my initials put on the back." He took the watch back. "It cost me eighty dollars, but I never have regretted it, Don Jeff. It's something to have."

Jeff combed Mariposa's mane idly with the teeth on the back of the

currycomb. "And what else, Mike? What else do you have?"

"Got me a good Heiser saddle. Got me three silk shirts. Don Jeff, I ain't one of your common beef-and-beans-cowpunchers.

"No. I can see that. Here, you finish the mare." He walked back into the office. John had been in and left breakfast on the desk. Jeff drank a cup of coffee, and pulled his canvas war-bag out of the bedroom. His saddle was still in its own sack; he had had no use for it since Mr. McReuben gave him the silver-mounted saddle. So he wouldn't have to pack it. It was not a Heiser saddle, but a Fort Worth product.

He put his blue serge suit in its dustproof sheath, laid it on top of his blankets in the war-bag. He had six flannel shirts, six cottons, and two linens to wear to town. A dozen pairs of socks. Two extra levis. Packing his underwear, he remembered the suit that he'd hung on the scrub oak. Been meaning for a month to go back and get it.

His watch was an ordinary dollar watch, but he had a silver belt of the very finest Navajo work, set with turquoise. Money couldn't buy a better belt. He had always felt that its possession marked him as a man apart. He put the silver belt on, laid his ordinary leather one on the clothes, and began rolling the war-bag closed as a horse stopped outside and whickered in answer to Mariposa's greeting.

He had forgotten the half-dozen text books left over from his college career; he opened the war-bag again.

THE footsteps on the porch were so light that his heart leaped for a minute, but then spurs jingled, and he bent to his packing.

Mr. McReuben said: "That's no ordinary belt, Jeff."

"Navajo."

"I know. You ought to get the leather blacked, and it would go good with Mariposa's outfit. How did the meeting go last night?"

"Didn't Rebel tell you?"

"I wanted to hear it from you."

Jeff tugged the last strap on the bag tight and turned to face the segundo. The small, composed features stared back at him serenely; and he wanted, for a minute, to smash his fist into that brown face. The impulse passed. "No use beatin' back that trail," Jeff said. "I'm leaving. That's answer enough for you."

"Matter of water, isn't it?"

"I don't get you, Mr. McReuben."

"Maybe it's my Irish coming out. When I first saw you, it was a matter of water too. You stuck with that bull till the water got there. This time you're quitting, and you aren't even thirsty yourself." Mr. McReuben went

over to the desk, picked up the water glass, and threw its contents out the front door. He filled the glass with coffee, and began drinking it.

"I tried to stay," Jeff said. "I have been trying since I got up this morning to stay. But you can't be a private after you've been an officer. Not in the same outfit."

"True for you, as we say in Dublin. If you want to run away when the going gets bad, run. But if you stay, you can't stay as a hand. The hands on the Buckster may have to use guns from now on, and I have never seen any evidence of your proficiency at that."

"I told you," Jeff said, "how I feel about guns. Anyway, you can't afford to keep me as second-segundo. You've got Brownie to pay, and Brownie's payroll to meet."

"Brownie's quit," Mr. McReuben said. "Gone between two days." He yawned. "It turned out getting rid of Brownie was nothing. I just told him the Sheriff in town had asked me a question or two, and left it to Brownie to decide whether the Sheriff had asked or I had told. He left."

Jeff said: "All right, Mr. McReuben. If you call it desertion if I quit, naturally I'll stay. But I've failed. I undertook to get the nesters out peaceful, and I didn't make it."

Mr. McReuben waved a gauntlet. "I didn't think it would work. We'll have to think up something else. In the meantime—let's see—you'd better make it a point to ride through the nester land today."

"You think I'm scared to?"

"Why, no," said Mr. McReuben. "Of course not." He waved the glove, and was gone.

The breakfast was cold now, but Jeff finished the coffee and ate a sandwich made of cold beef and cold toast. He got a bundle out of his war-bag, the carefully tied bundle containing his guns.

Mariposa was saddled and bridled there in the corral. He dropped the guns into the saddlebag and mounted.

The mare shuffled, California style, toward the big house, and then he lifted her reins, and she went into the slow lope that was his delight.

Watching the play of the muscles beneath the shining hide, he wished his cousin Loren could see the horse. Nobody around Van Horn had ever even thought about a horse like Mariposa.

Nadita, the little pinto mare, was standing in front of the big house, her head down, one hip unjointed for comfort. So Lora was there, visiting. Asking Mrs. Buckster for a chance for the nesters? Complaining about Jeff? It didn't much matter. She'd get short shrift from the old lady if it was a matter involving the Buckster Ranch.

The Bucksters were always right and the outsiders were always wrong, and that was the way an owner ought to be. And if a rider didn't think the same way, he ought to quit his job.

He kicked Mariposa; and the mare, startled, shot ahead at her express-train gait. He didn't pull her in until he topped the rise over the Mexican village, and only then because Rebel was sitting his horse there.

"*Mañana, compadre,*" Jeff said.

"Mawnin', Don Jeff. Where are you bound at this unseemly rate?"

"Riding through the nester land to see what's up."

ONE gray glove combed gray whiskers. "Steady, Shenandoah. Why, son, I wouldn't do that. As a matter of fact, Miss Harriott's at the big house. Mrs. Buckster sent for her."

"I'm not courting girls today."

"Why, son, if you're courtin' what I think you are courtin', you better let me go with you. Now that I come to think of it, I've got a bit of business up there my own self. Unless I misremember, that Lonan said he was a Kansan; I think I'll ask him if he ever rode with the Jayhawkers."

"I'm riding alone, Rebel."

"Were you anyone else I call to mind just now, I'd resent that, Jefferson. Let's pretend you didn't say it."

"One other person you wouldn't resent it from, Rebel, is Mr. McReuben. His orders."

"So?" The Confederate spat to windward. "That ends the discussion, then. . . . You know about Brownie?"

"Yes. Mr. McReuben got rid of him."

"Mr. McReuben seldom miscalculates, but I am not sure it's that simple. I have tried to see what Brownie had to gain here. I could not. Nor could I believe a man of his ability would remain with us for a stipend—possibly the amount he formerly spent on cigars."

"What he had to gain," Jeff said, "was control of the Buckster."

"Jefferson, you astound me. With Mr. McReuben and myself here, how could he so delude himself?"

"Mr. McReuben," said Jeff, "is only a man. A good man—but so's Brownie. With Mr. McReuben eliminated, there'd be no one who'd dare to buck Brownie. He'd find it fairly easy to control an old lady, and a young boy."

"You are forgetting me," Rebel said.

"Not necessarily." Jeff hesitated. "Brownie is fairly young—and he seems to be patient enough."

Rebel took it well. "It is a thing no man likes to admit, but you are correct, Jefferson. It cannot be long now before I begin to slow down."

"Maybe quite a while," Jeff said quickly; "but a man like Brownie could wait."

"Jefferson," said Rebel, "I am your friend, and wish to remain so. Therefore, you will take what I am about to say in the spirit I offer it in. . . . Have you, Jeff, ever killed a man?"

Jeff looked away. "Never in anger," he said. "I thought about it after that set-to with Brownie. I wore the guns a couple of days; then I put them away."

Rebel contemplating the horizon, seemed not to have heard. "Jeff, it is a strange thing, the way you feel when you are in a new country and have to be careful all the time that you must not answer if someone calls you by your right name. It is a thing I never got used to, and believe me, I experienced it often." Some of the luster went out of the blue eyes. "Well, suh, we live and learn. . . . And I have learned that men like Brownie are never amenable to reason." Rebel touched the brim of his hat with his crop, and took the jumping horse toward the big house.

After a moment, Jeff raised Mariposa's bridle reins, and the mare loped up the wagon road mechanically. When he got down to open the gate, he went to her side, and took the guns and unwrapped them. They were beautiful guns, lovely in their simplicity. Magnificent weapons, with stocks that were plain and smooth. He buckled them on, and the broad leather belt molded itself about his hips. He found himself liking the comforting snugness and the weight as he led Mariposa through the gate.

Then, shutting the gate behind him, he rode toward the nester-land.

Chapter Fifteen

HARVEY SMITH's field was deserted. Jeff reined in and made himself a cigarette when he got that far; his practiced eye estimated the length and number of the plowed furrows. About an acre a week. Each day now, as the sun beat down on the adobe, the plowing got harder and harder; and possible rain was three months away—certain rain, five or six months.

When he let Mariposa go again, her shoes rang as though on concrete. Mathematically speaking, it should be apparent to these poor dirt farmers that any man who didn't have cash to get through the summer, was licked and through. In some California soils—in Humboldt loam and in sandy loam—what Harvey Smith said was true. The water was in the soil, and you could work down and get it. But not in adobe; if it was there at all, it was so far down that a well-driller and a pump were necessary.

The cards had been stacked against the nesters from the beginning. The

only way this land could be farmed was by a big outfit that could get a dozen plows working in that short season when the soil was workable. And then the land ought to be put to cover crops and plowed under every year for a few years.

But the farmers had arrived in the spring, shot their money trying to get a fall crop, failed and gone out on day wages. Which meant they had been unable to be there to plow when it was possible. Now the work, whatever the job they had been on, was over, and the five months the Government allowed them to be off the land was over, and they—though they didn't know it—were over too.

And in dying, they were going to bring the proud, beautiful Buckster Ranch down with them, the way a rattlesnake will bite the heel of the man who has just broken its back. . . . No, Jeff thought, snuffing his cigarette out on the saddlehorn and starting up the trail, that wasn't a fair picture. Because they weren't rattlesnakes, but more like some kind of bugs.

Three miles farther on, he found them. It was an interesting scene, a striking one. Jeff hesitated, then unbuckled his guns, wrapped the belt around them and dropped them in the saddlebag.

Riding closer, he saw half a dozen teams of horses hitched to one plow. Harvey Smith was bearing down on one handle of the plow, and Lonan on the other. There was a nester on the lines of each team, because these horses were not used to being driven multiple, and also—perhaps—because there wasn't a jerkline skinner in the crowd.

The noise and shouting was something. The plow fairly tore through the tough ground, but it should have been a riding plow, a gang plow; the two men on the handles were unable to keep it down.

Every time it came out of the ground, Lonan would yell: "Whoa!" The driver nearest him would try to pull his team up, but not quickly enough. At least one horse out of the twelve would start kicking, and confusion would reign for a moment.

Finally a strap broke on someone's harness and they all stopped. Harvey Smith straightened up, and wiped sweat out of his eyes with the sleeve of his cotton shirt.

He saw Jeff.

The young farmer walked over. "All right," he said. "We've been expecting you. Ever' one of us's got a shotgun in the brush, yonder. We're plowin' Mr. Lonan's field, and we don't want no trouble with you."

"The racket that string-and-hay-wire outfit is making, I could have shot you all before you knew I was here."

"Well, why didn't you, then?" Harvey Smith shook his head. "Get it straight, Decker. No more talking, no more lectures. You bother us, and we'll shoot you for trespassing."

"I'm not wearing a gun," Jeff said. "And neither are you, Harvey."

"No. But I string along with my own people. Git, Decker."

"No," Jeff said. "What do you think all that is getting you except some excitement?" He pushed his chin toward the six-team outfit.

"We're gittin' her plowed." Harvey smiled. "We're workin' together, and gittin' her plowed. You didn't think we could do it, did you?"

"You're breaking the ground, all right," Jeff said. "But for what, Harv? Where's your water?"

"We'll start her with that little old spring over there, and that'll start the water comin' up out of the ground."

"That's called capillary action," Jeff said. "It'll work sometimes, too. Where you've got good damp subsoil and just a crust of baked clay on top. It won't work here. Your land contours are all wrong."

"It might work," said Smith.

Jeff said: "No. And if you dam up all those little creeks, the Buckster cattle don't drink. It's not enough water to help you, and—"

BUT the other men had seen him now. There was a dash for the brush, and the clumsy farmers got their shotguns. Jeff had never felt more contempt for hoe-men than he felt then.

But with guns in their hands they were quiet, assured, the calm assurance of the man who has the upper hand. "Git outa here, you ranny," Lonan said. "This is my land, and I'm tellin' you. Get outa here."

Jeff took out his tobacco. "Anybody have a smoke with me?" There were no takers. "Now's your time, men," he said. "Take a clod out of those furrows and feel it. Feel how dry it is. Take a shovel and dig till it breaks your shovel. Dry-farming's all right, men, but not parched farming."

"We're workin' men," Harvey Smith said. "We have to get back to work. Go on, Decker."

"Harvey, do you know this isn't going to work?"

Harvey Smith lowered his head and his voice: "Yes. I think maybe you're right. But good Lord, man, it's our last chance. We'll get her broken and our seedlings in, and if it doesn't work—"

"You'll move on and leave your mess in someone else's yard."

"Harv, you comin'?" Lonan asked.

"Comin'," Harvey Smith said. He took a few steps away.

"Men," Jeff called, "this is maybe your last chance. Four dollars a day



"Who is it?" he cried. "I like to know who I kill."

for a man and his team down on the Buckster Ranch. You hear me? Eight hours' work, and you sleep on your own claim."

"Jeff," Harvey said, "what are you really doin' up here?"

"Mr. McReuben sent me up," Jeff said, "to make a last try. One last peaceful try."

"You better go," Harvey said; "we're sticking together. And from now on, Jeff, we'll shoot you like any other Buckster man that shows on our land. Just like any other."

Jeff raised his hand. "Adios. I tried you last night; I tried you today. I've pinned everything I got or hope to have on settling this thing peaceable."

Somebody threw a clod of adobe. It hit Jeff's shoulder and fell to Mariposa's neck. The mare shifted and tried to get going. Jeff held her while his face got red, held her while his hand moved jerkily and automatically toward the saddlebag and his guns.

Then his will surmounted his anger, and he drew back his hand and picked up the reins, picked them up sharply. Mariposa wheeled and took off with such abruptness that dirt flew from her heels and spattered the farmers.

THE mare, uneasy from Jeff's uneasiness and from the squealing of the half-broken plow-horses, left that place fast. The few miles to the gate were nothing to the grain-fed Mariposa. She dropped her favorite rocking-chair roll, and ran, her feet drumming on the 'dobe. Her coat darkened almost to chestnut, and then burst into lather where the lines or the long mane whipped her neck; but then, warmed up, she began sweating easily, smoothly, slugging her head into the bit for support, and letting herself go.

It was like riding an eagle, or a fast boat. There were two of them, Mariposa and Jeff, but neither was carrying the other; they were just going along together, and something outside them was supplying the power, the speed. And when he felt the golden mare slow up, he knew it was not because she was tired, but because she remembered there was a gate ahead, and was easing for it.

Mr. McReuben, Rebel and Pecos were waiting on the other side of the gate. Somehow he knew they would be, and the knowledge was good. He pulled the palomino up, left her standing, her head down, fighting for her wind while he brought out his guns and buckled them on. This time he tied the holsters down with the leather thongs.

When he finished and felt the weight good against his legs, Rebel already had the gate open, was saying: "You make Pecos go back with you, Mr. McReuben, suh."

Jeff walked through the gate. "You better take Pecos' hoss, there," Rebel said, his eyes flicking down to the guns with elaborate unconcern. "Your mare's about done in."

"He will not," Pecos said. "I'm goin' along. Rebel, I'm old enough." "Nobody," said Mr. McReuben, "is going any place."

"They threw mud at me," Jeff said softly. "Stoned me out of there!"

"Hurt you?" Mr. McReuben asked. The cold fire in Jeff Decker faltered, then glowed again. "No. Just tryin' to talk to them, an'—"

"You handle the boy, Don Segundo," Rebel said. "We'll teach them. Jeff's been fair to them. He's tried to talk to them, twice now. That's enough."

"Brains," Mr. McReuben said. "I hired Jeff for his brains. If he's going to lose them because some ignorant farmer throws a hunk of 'dobe, I might as well have kept Brownie."

Pecos said: "Now mebbe somebody 'round here'll listen to me. I'm a Buckster, ain't I? We don't need Brownie, McReuben. Jes' me an' Rebel an' Jeff—"

"Mr. McReuben," said the segundo. "And don't forget it, son. When Mrs. Buckster says you can take the ranch over, you can call me Mickie if you want to. Till then—"

"Hush," Rebel said. "Someone comin' up behind us."

Jeff picked up Mariposa's lines and pulled her toward him. He loosened her cinch a little, began walking her up and down to cool her. After a few steps, he led her away from the gate, well into the Buckster land.

"Good boy," Mr. McReuben said.

"Just don't talk to me," Jeff said. "You're right, but don't talk to me." He slowly walked the mare. Two more turns, and he reached up, brushed off his shoulder. "It's gone," he said. "I— You can talk to me in a minute."

Rebel followed him back in, shut the gate. "Mus' be the water in Texas," he said, "seem' how his dad was from Illinois."

"Mother's kin had men in the Alamo." Suddenly Jeff laughed. "It's all right now, gentlemen. But nobody likes—"

"Sure," Mr. McReuben said. "Make yourself a cigarette. Pecos, walk Jeff's horse for him. Take it easy, Jeff."

JEFF grinned, his cheek muscles feeling stiff when he moved them, and leaned against the sign announcing that here the road went through private property.

He said: "Did you really hear a horse coming up the trail, Rebel?"

"Coming closer now."

"The blood's still pounding in my head. But it's all right, I can talk

about it now. I—it's funny, isn't it, how mad you get?"

"Me, I'd'a' killed 'em right there, with my fists," Pecos said. "How come you're wearin' guns, Jeff?"

Jeff shrugged. He rolled a cigarette, struck a match on the sign. Suddenly he straightened up. "Mr. McReuben?"

"Jeff."

"I got it. This sign. The lawyer—he had it all the time. This sign says this road can be closed any time, doesn't it?"

"Yes, certainly, that's to prevent it becoming a public highway. You have to close it once a year, or thereabouts, for a few hours. The lawyer takes care of it."

"Not this time. Mr. McReuben, I lost a ranch waiting for the law to take hold. This time, let the other fellow wait. We close the road, and let them bring suit to open it, and what happens?"

"Why, then it's a forty-eight-mile round trip to a store for them. But it won't do any good. I granted the road in the first place because, if I didn't, the Government was going to build a road through the San Fernando Valley for them."

"How long would that take?" Jeff asked.

"You better get your six-shooter out, Reb. That hoss is a-comin' up," Pecos said hopefully. Nobody listened to him.

"Why didn't anyone ever think of that before?" Rebel asked.

Mr. McReuben said: "Hold on, Jeff. You still mad?"

"Sure. But still—"

Pecos said: "I got it. An' me and Rebel and the boys guard the gate, and it's open season if the squatters try and open it."

"Never did see anybody so bent on committing indiscriminate homicide," Rebel said. And then: "Hi, there's our lone rider. It's your gal, Jeff."

"Not any more," Jeff said.

"I wish I was twenty years younger," Rebel sighed. "Well, thi'ty, anyhow."

"Rebel's in love," Pecos said. "Ain't it wonderful?"

But Jeff, one hand still holding on to the sign, was looking down the trail. From the looks of Nadita, Lora Harriott had tried to make the same kind of ride that Jeff had; but the pinto was not the horse that Mariposa was. That pinto might never ride again.

Lora slipped off when she saw them, and ran the last hundred feet. Nobody moved to meet her. "Jeff!" she said. "Jeff!"

He couldn't help it. He ran toward her, clumsy in his high-heeled boots. He reached out for her, but she stopped. "You've got to come," she said. "You and Pecos."

"What? Me and—"

"Don't be so stupid," the breathless girl panted. "Mrs. Buckster may be dying. She wants to see you. She said you, but Pecos had better go too."

Mr. McReuben was there then. His voice was cold, incisive. "Rebel, knot that pinto's reins on her horn. Pecos, get going." He reached down lifted Lora off her feet and perched her on the broad back of the sorrel, behind him. "The palomino?"

"She'll ride," Jeff said.

Mr. McReuben said: "Get going, Pecos, you fool! We'll follow." The boy sent his bay thundering along the trail. Jeff cinched up Mariposa with cold fingers, mounted and rode up alongside the segundo and the nurse.

Chapter Sixteen

REBEL went away after Pecos, and then the pinto, her reins fastened up, whickered and came after them. "Your horse is gone," Mr. McReuben said.

"That's why I'm carrying you."

Lora said: "I know. It's all right."

"Nothing's all right," Mr. McReuben said. "Not ever again. Her heart?"

"It's just—just run down," Lora said. She couldn't have been comfortable clinging on behind Mr. McReuben, but her face and voice were calm. "She didn't get up this morning, Nancy Ramirez, the maid said. They sent for Dr. Allen, but he wasn't in Santa Monica. So they sent for me. And I—I came in, and she smiled. She said: 'Perhaps I have indigestion, but I think it's my heart.'"

"And it was," Jeff said. He reached down and automatically wiped foam from Mariposa's neck with the edge of his riding glove.

"You ever notice this ring?" Mr. McReuben asked. "You ever noticed that red ribbon I wear evenings? I'm a Trinity Dublin man. There's no finer college in the world. I am a member of the French Legion of Honor—some work I did in Africa for the French. When a man like that goes on the bum, it is worse than when another kind of man does. You know that, Jeff?"

"Sure." Jeff wished that voice would stop. He wished he and Mariposa were alone on the trail. He did not even want to think about Lora.

"Well, what does it all add up to?"

"I don't know."

"Mr. McReuben. Call me Mr. McReuben, because that's what she made of me."

"Yes, Mr. McReuben."

"And she's sent for you. What does that mean, do you know?"

"No, Mr. McReuben. Maybe to tell me to help you." Jeff had an

idea, and he felt better for having it. "Mrs. Buckster doesn't have to send for you, Mr. McReuben. If time is short, she would not waste any telling you anything, because she knows you. Mrs. Buckster knows she can count on you."

The voice was not so hard to listen to now. "You're right—she wouldn't have to tell me anything. I've been over the plans with her, night after night, all these years. She trusts me."

Lora said: "My pony is keeping up with us now. Maybe I could ride her."

"We're nearly there," Mr. McReuben said. "Your palomino keep up?"

"Go ahead. Don't wait for me."

"Mrs. Buckster said for you to come. I'll bring you."

"Yes, Mr. McReuben." Tentatively, Jeff clucked, and Mariposa was off again. To anyone who didn't know what she had been through, it would have seemed that she was a fresh horse, out to shake some of the night's oats out of her.

So they pulled up before the big house at a gallop, and turned their horses over to a Spanish boy there. *"El medico esta aqui."*

"All right," Mr. McReuben said. "You go on in, Jeff. If Mrs. Buckster asks, tell her I'm seeing that the doctor's horses are being cared for. Tell Mrs. Buckster I will look after everything." The little *segundo* went around the house, his back stiff, his heels ringing on the beaten earth.

Jeff took Lora's arm as they went up the broad stone stairs inside the house. "He's taking it well," he said, "Mr. McReuben. You'll never see a tear out of him."

"You don't know much, Jeff. He's gone to cry behind the house. I guess he knew it was coming. Dr. Allen warned her some months ago, she said, and while she wouldn't tell—She's terribly old, Jeff."

"Yes."

"Older than you think. Nearly eighty. And you had to admire her, though you couldn't love her. But I guess why everyone feels so bad is, it's the end of an era, the death of the last of the big *rancheros*."

"I gotta go see her," Jeff said, and walked down the hall to where Rebel stood, a stiff gray sentry.

"Go in, sub," Rebel said. "She has asked foh you, Don Jeff."

Rebel had been more Virginian and Mr. McReuben had been Irish for the first time that morning; as he took the chair beside the bed, Jeff heard himself talking in the somewhat lazy drawl of his youth. "Here I am, Mrs. Buckster. It's Jeff."

The doctor, stiff in a Prince Albert, was standing with his hands behind him, bracing him on the edge of the

black walnut dressing-table. "Please don't talk any more than you have to, Mrs. Buckster."

"Leave the room, Doctor," Mrs. Buckster said. "I will talk all I wish. You doctors are fools. It does not matter whether I die in ten minutes or ten days, and I wish you to leave the room."

"But Mrs. Buckster—"

"Send that pretty nurse in if you want to know how I am. She can stay in here. And you, Lawson, you may go. A deathbed is no place for a youngster."

"Yes, Grandmaw."

Even now it was curious to hear that dignified person called anything so personal as Grandmaw. Pecos got up and went out, and if there was relief in his bearing, you couldn't blame the kid. The doctor went, too, clearing his throat, and then Lora came in. She said: "Do you feel any better, dear?"

"Mrs. Buckster."

"Dear Mrs. Buckster," Lora said.

"You're a good girl. I like a little touch of impudence. But not too much, not too much. . . . Jeff—"

"Yes, Mrs. Buckster."

"Did you know I was responsible for your coming out here, Jeff?"

"I didn't know, Mrs. Buckster."

"I had no family. . . . Jeff, if Mr. Buckster had lived, we would have made the most beautiful ranch in the world here. We'll do it yet, Jeff. A ranch that bred its own horses, raised its own servants, made its own wine, had its own harbor. A kingdom, Jeff. . . . It will be all Lawson's now."

"Yes, Mrs. Buckster."

"We looked a long time, Jeff. From Montana to the border, from the Sabine River west. And this was the finest piece of land in the West. The most beautiful, the most varied. Mr. Buckster was very wealthy, Jeff. He made several million dollars in Chicago—"

The firm old voice was still. One hand came and felt the ribbon on her neck, then, satisfied that it was straight, dropped down again.

"But Mr. Buckster did not enjoy his money, Jeff. A ranch—ah, a ranch is the thing. Land! Your own land. . . . Jeff?"

"Yes, Mrs. Buckster."

"Tell me the truth, Jeff. Can the Buckster Ranch be made to pay its way, so that Lawson won't lose it? . . . The truth, Jeff."

"I think so, Mrs. Buckster. I'm almost certain so."

"You are a truthful boy, Jeff, although somewhat tamer than I had expected." The keen blue eyes opened wide and looked into his own.

Jeff stared at her, suddenly conscious of his guns, looming large as cannon here in this woman's room.

"Mr. McReuben," she went on matter-of-factly, "will hold the ranch for Lawson, but someone will have to teach him to run it. You will do that, Jeff?"

"Yes ma'am. I'll try."

"Just so you do your damndest," said the old lady. "Nurse!"

Lora said: "Yes, Mrs. Buckster."

"Give Jeff the watch you will find in the upper right-hand drawer of that chest over there. It belonged to my father, Jeff, to William Tyler Decker. And now, Jeff, send Mr. McReuben in, and I will die."

"Mrs.—"

"Young man, I'll have you know I am not dying because I have to, but because I want to. I am ready. I could live another few days, if I wanted to, but I don't. . . . Send Mr. McReuben in."

"Yes, Mrs. Buckster," said Jeff, and bending, he kissed her forehead.

"I like a little impudence," she murmured, "but not too much, not too much. Rebel to look after Pecos, you to manage the ranch, and Mr. McReuben to hold it. Send him in."

Jeff went out into the hall, and bowed to the *segundo*. He did not watch as Lora closed the door behind the short, stiff back. Instead, Jeff took up his post opposite Rebel. Pecos leaned on a wall a few feet away, staring at the ground, and a frightened group of Mexicans huddled past him. The doctor was bending over one of the women, who looked as though she had collapsed.

It was not long before Lora came out, and said: "Doctor!" The medico detached himself from the Mexicans, and followed her in, and then Mr. McReuben came out.

Pecos looked up and searched the *segundo's* face. Then he gave a single, choked sob.

Jeff took a step toward the boy, but Rebel stopped him. "Leave him alone," he said. "He's a man now. He's our boss now. Leave him tend his grief alone, like a man. Lord knows I got me a passel of my own."

Chapter Seventeen

REBEL said: "This is not what I would call excitin' work. We been guardin' this gate a week, and since the first day, ain't nobody tried to use it."

Jeff shook his head. He was sitting on the ground, his back to a live-oak, idly whittling a piece of wood. Down the wagon road, Mariposa and Shenandoah, bored with grazing all day, stood with their heads together, dozing. "I'd give a lot to know how the plowing is coming along, the other side of this fence. . . . Why, Rebel,

this is Harvey Smith's doing. Outwait us. They know we haven't many hands left, and they figure we'll give up keeping the gate closed after a while."

"That Brownie!" the old man said. "He spread it all around town that the Buckster Ranch was dry and worthless. If I'd found him, I'd feel better. Spent five dollars in town, an' all I got was a headache."

"Five dollars isn't so much," Jeff said. "What with one thing and another, and having the Mexicanos tend the cattle, we're still going to have to sell she-stock to keep going. And you needed the change."

Rebel squatted on his heels, and began tossing a bone-handled pocket knife into the ground. "I needed Brownie's scalp still more," he said. "When I finally gave up, I started for Sawtelle, but somehow, makin' the night hideous for a bunch of G.A.R. vets didn't seem to have a point any more. Pore ol' men, I got to thinkin', they mebbe need their rest. The war's been over more than forty years."

JEFF shut his knife, put it away. "Here, you whittle, I'll play mumble-peg awhile. This is no life for a cowhand. Where's Pecos?"

Rebel shut his own knife, but he kept squatting there. "Pecos is gettin' a lesson in French from Mr. McReuben. . . . Reckon it'll help him any in the years to come?"

Jeff didn't bother to answer that one. He dug two holes in the ground with his spurs, stretched. "This was a fine idea of mine. Only I forgot I'd have to be one of the watchers."

"Pecos and Red are on tonight, eh, Jeff?"

"Yeah."

"You reckon we're doin' right? That highway money's awful easy money."

Jeff sat up. "If you're bored watching here, I'll get Mike tomorrow. You can see that the vaqueros get that herd into the yards."

Rebel said: "Come off yore high horse, Jefferson. This is nothin' to me. Sitting still is what a Southerner likes best, or so I've read. You know what I mean."

"You mean Pecos, of course. Why, Rebel, you know what I know. We're Mrs. Buckster's executors, and it's up to us to do what we think she would have done."

"Yeah, sure. Just trying to make talk, I guess."

"Sometimes, though— She was just doing what her husband wanted her to. An' he's been dead a long, long time. How could he know?" Jeff asked. "Times change." Then his hand clenched, and he was thumping it on the ground. "Mrs. Buckster gave me my chance, gave you yours,

and Mr. McReuben says she pulled him out of the gutter. If she left us a note to go get the State Capitol in Sacramento and bring it down here, it would be up to us to go down trying."

"You're mighty right," Rebel said. "Mighty right. What you yellin' at me for? I just asked." He sighed, then suddenly went flat on his face, and put his ear to the ground. He straightened up again, with a mild show of interest. "Hoss comin' off the nester land. Jes' one, though. Scout, I reckon."

"Sure. Coming to see if we're still here. Well, we are, Rebel."

"Sho." The old man went and got Shenandoah, swung into his flat hunting saddle. He led Mariposa back.

They were sitting straight in the saddle, facing the gate, when the horse rounded the curve. It was the pinto Nadita; somehow Jeff had known it would be.

Lora Harriott pulled up at the gate. "Captain Beecham!" She did not look at Jeff.

"Hi, Miss Harriott. Glad to see your little mare is all right."

"She was lame for a few days, but she's all right. Will this road be open this afternoon, Captain Beecham?"

Rebel put his gray hat back on his gray head. "You'll have to ask Jeff heah, ma'am. Ah'm jes a yard." He was right in the middle of Virginia now.

"How soon may I expect to pass?" She was looking at Mariposa.

"Our authority over this road extends until January, 1913. It will be closed until that time, at least."

Rebel said: "Say, do you two know each other? Miss Harriott, Mr. Decker. Mr. Decker's one of the trustees of the Buckster Ranch, Miss Harriott."

"So I've heard," Lora said. "And he didn't wait long to show his authority. Or his true colors. But I want to know how soon I can get through. I'm a public official, and—"

"I'm sorry, Miss Harriott," Jeff said, "but no one can pass. I don't know about public officials, and in the absence of our attorney, I can't decide."

"This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. I need medicine, supplies—"

Jeff said: "If you'll give me the list, I'll ride down to the big house and fill it for you."

"I don't need anything from any Buckster house, big or little. I—"

"A public official," Jeff told the California sky. "I should think medicine was either needed, or not."

Her face flushed. "Oh, Captain Beecham, would you really get me some things from the medicine chest? Just bring them to the schoolhouse—here's the list."

Rebel bowed, his hat wide from his side. "It would be an honor, Miss Harriott, but I'm afraid you'll have to wait here; orders are we are not to trespass on the squatters' land."

"They're not squatters. . . . All right, I'll wait here. Don't be long."

Rebel tucked his list in the pocket of his shirt, put his hat on, and was gone. Lora Harriott began practicing pivots on Nadita, riding the little horse away from the fence at a lope, making her wheel and charge the fence, wheel and do it over again.

Jeff watched her five minutes, then waited till she was at the fence. "Considerin' that hoss has been ailing," he remarked, "I'd rest her up when I got the chance. But then, I'm no nurse."

The girl didn't seem to hear him, but after a while she stopped trying to make a cowpony out of the pinto, and came to rest near the fence.

Jeff didn't smile as he said: "Bring Nadita near the fence, and I'll loosen her cinch."

"Aren't you being rather childish?" "A hot horse ought to have its cinch loosened. Nothing childish about that."

"I mean reaching through a fence to do it. I mean closing this gate and driving all these heavy posts to keep it closed. Wasn't that a lot of trouble?"

"I didn't drive the posts down." Jeff leaned on the gate. "We had the Mexicans do that."

"No, Prince Jeff and King McReuben and Count Rebel wouldn't soil their hands."

"Oh," Jeff said, "stop being so quarrelsome! Listen: I love you. I'm so glad to see you again my heart feels like it was bursting. I think you're beautiful, kind, got brains and—and—" He stopped.

THE girl let Nadita's reins go and put her shoulder against the fence. "You—you—why, Jeff, you crazy cowboy."

"You're not mad," he said. "See? You aren't mad. You can try to be, but you're not. 'Cause you love me, too."

"Maybe—maybe I do."

"Lora!" He got his arms over the fence, grabbed her shoulders. He turned her to kiss her, and she didn't resist; he pressed his lips to hers. "When Mrs. Buckster was dyin'," he murmured, "you were so nice to her, to me. Bad as I felt, it was something wonderful to see you moving around that room. And—Lora, in case you've been worrying, she forgave you. I could tell."

The girl twisted away. "Forgave me? For what?"

Jeff sighed. He wanted to reach through the fence and grab her again. But instinct told him that dignity was

necessary to satisfactory love-making. "All right," he said. "My fault. I shouldn't have brought up this squatter business now."

"They aren't squatters. They have preempted Government land at the Government's invitation, and you people are starving them off it."

"We're doing it the legal way," Jeff said. "Like you wanted us to do. You said we ought to petition the Government to remove them, and wait for the law to act. Instead of that, we've closed them in, and left it up to them to wait for the law to make us let them out. What's the difference?"

"Lots," Lora said. "You're a big, rich ranch. They're poor people. They've put what little money they could make into hiring Brownie—"

"What?" Jeff's shout made both horses raise their heads sharply.

Lora said, curiously: "Didn't you know? Brownie and a lot of his men are working for Harvey's committee now. They're going to—" She broke off. "I shouldn't tell you this. You're the enemy."

Jeff gripped the fence rail. "Am I? You were the girl was against any kind of violence. You ought to be against your precious nesters now. . . . Yonder comes Rebel. Want to take Harvey a message for me?"

"Your glove in his face?"

"No. Jes' this: It's a lot easier to hire a man like Brownie than it is to fire him. And another thing, lady—" "Yes?"

"I ain't sure of the truth of this. Seems to me like hirin' Brownie and some of his men would run to a lot more money than these nesters have."

"Their lawyer advanced them some money. I know I shouldn't tell you all this, Jeff." Her voice rose an octave. "I'm still on their side. I'm always on the side of the little man against the big, always will be. You are too. I know. But—I thought if I told you, you'd open the gate."

"No," Jeff said. "We can't open the gate. Here's Rebel."

The girl said: "Jeff—Jeff—"

He said: "I got the word of a dying woman put on me, Lora. A woman I admired, one who did a lot for me. I told you what I thought of you, and it still goes. Only, in this thing, not you, not my life, not anything in the world can make me break that word. If you can't see it my way, maybe I'm going to have to go through life thinking I missed the only girl would have made me happy. I don't know about that; seems like I was just a kid till I hit this Buckster Ranch and met you and all; maybe I'm not used to being grown up yet."

Rebel came pounding up behind him; Jeff heard him slow his horse down. Tact—Virginia tact.

"I can't see it your way," Lora said. "The nesters have a right to work out their own problem, win or lose."

"They'll lose."

"They have a right to lose their own way then, not because someone bigger forced them to lose."

Jeff stood up. "All right. Here's Rebel with your medicine. You better walk Nadita about a mile before you let her out again. . . . And tell Brownie we're ready for him. Any time he wants to come through here," Jeff said, "we're ready. Any time at all," said Jeff, standing by the silent Rebel and watching what seemed to be his life, his heart and his future riding away on a pinto mare.

Chapter Eighteen

BECAUSE it was late June, it stayed light enough to see by until after seven. Jeff's fine watch showed five minutes past when Mr. Garrison rode up the trail to them on a coal-black parade horse.

Pecos' eyes bugged out at the lawyer's splendid attire, and Rebel said: "You stayin' for the fireworks, Mr. Garrison? You're all dressed for the part."

"No, Rebel." The lawyer shook his head. "I haven't pulled a trigger in twenty years; I'd probably run like a kid when I heard the guns go off. My shooting days are over." He laughed. "This is my campaigning outfit—you have to have cowboy clothes and a good horse to march in a political parade in California. That belt of yours, Decker, is a good start toward being Congressman. Let me know if you want to run."

"Let's hope we're not all running before the night's out," Jeff said.

"Don't you worry," Mr. McReuben said, "I've felt frightened before every gun-squabble I've ever gone into. Haven't you, Rebel?"

"Sho. Mr. Garrison, I count on you to get Pecos here back to town with you, and keep him there."

"Well," Pecos said, "I ain't goin'. I'm the head of the Buckster family now, and I got a right to lead my men in this fight. I'm stickin' right here."

"Son," Rebel said, "you ain't the head of the Buckster family. You're the *whole* family. If you get yo'self shot, the fight's over, on account o' they's nothin' left to fight for."

"Sure," Mr. Garrison said, "that's right, Pecos. Why, in a European war, the King doesn't lead the troops. Edward didn't even go to Africa in the Boer War."

Trying to be kings in the United States, trying to make a kingdom in the Twentieth Century! Lora had said that.

"That's right," Jeff said. "I never looked at it that way. Why, if Pecos grows up and decides he wants to be a racing driver instead of a rancher, all this is wasted."

"You always wonder why you're here before a gun-fight," Mr. McReuben said. "Forget it, Jeff. The ranch would still be here."

"Sure," Jeff said. "Yeah. You see 'em in Texas. The Santa Monica Land and Cattle Company, Ranch No. 2. Head office, Room 912, First National Bank Building."

Mr. Garrison said: "Well, I have to get back to town. Now, you have the papers there: receipted, attested notices served on each and every one of the preëmptors that this road is closed permanently, and that any attempt to re-open it will be met with arrest. . . . You have the warrant for the arrest of Thomas N. Brown, alias 'Cunard' Brown, alias a lot of other things, for murder on the high seas and in the Oklahoma territory, arson in New Mexico territory, and a couple of crimes in the States. Now, these papers make it legal for you to do anything you want to, including kill; but first, you have to announce what you are doing."

"Call your shots?" Mr. McReuben asked, no smile on his firm face.

"Exactly. If this Brown comes over first, any citizen has the right to arrest him; you must have witnesses to attest that you tried to arrest him quietly before you shot him. If any homesteader comes over, order him off your land, and make sure you have witnesses that you did order him to leave; then it is up to you."

"All right," Mr. McReuben said. "We understand that. We've run barbed wire all through the brush on our side of the fence, so anyone who comes over the fence will flounder around and give us time to get to him. We're sure they're coming over tonight. Rebel made a scouting trip. "But now— Mr. Garrison, whoever makes this speech is going to get killed. Standing up, reading papers in front of armed men. Does it have to be done that way?"

"You have to have witnesses that you tried to stop them legally."

"That's easy arranged," Rebel said. "Jeff and me, here, we heard the segundo—"

"All right," Mr. Garrison said. "I'll be in the Sheriff's office; if there are any arrests, I'll see that you don't stay in jail. . . . Come on, Lawson."

Pecos said, "Sho," and moved an easy step toward the horses. Then his gun was out, big in his young hand. "Anybody tries to make me leave here, the fight starts right now. . . . I mean you, Rebel. Old's you are, an' ornery's you are, I'll plug you, so help me."

Mr. McReuben said: "Rebel, I think he'll do it. All right, let him stay. *Señor el Abogado*, I think you'd better depart from our midst. They're comin' over."

The lawyer said: "Well, then. Remember, boys, God and the law are on your side."

"The law, anyway," Jeff said.

Garrison looked at him curiously. "The law's enough, Decker. I'll take your horses back a ways as I go."

Jeff said: "Sure. No use letting good horses get hurt." He felt Mr. McReuben looking at him, but he was watching Rebel. The old gun-fighter had both his sidearms out now, was cocking them.

"Yere goes nothin'," Rebel said. "I ever tell you, Jeff, when I lived through the Second Manassas, I felt I'd never be scared again. But I always am."

The dark was coming now. They were all outdoor men, range men; they didn't have to tell each other that those little noises up the ridge were the sounds of many men coming at them. Dark would be the time.

"I guess servin' those papers today provoked 'em," Jeff whispered.

"They're out of food," Rebel said. "The pore, ornery pikers! Not enough sense to know they're licked afore they start."

"Are they? They got Brownie."

"They won't have 'im long," Pecos' shrill whisper said. "I'm gonna git me that big Brownie fust thing."

Of them all, Jeff thought, Pecos was the only one not afraid. And that was right, too, because Pecos was the only one young enough not to know what he was up against. No man, no matter how brave, wants to die; and Mr. McReuben and Rebel had both killed, and knew that that was a bitter victory, too. The joy of seeing your enemy dead was a hollow one.

Jeff, standing in the purple dusk, and freeing his long-unused guns, felt them nestle against his palms like living things—like snakes.

AND then something was all over and something else had started. In the gathering dark, Brownie's pot-bellied figure was large in the road, and metal shone in either hand.

"All right," Brownie bawled. "I'm going to make this the most public damned highway west of Broadway. Comin' through!"

The guns roared in his big hands. A splinter flew from the fence in front of Jeff's eyes.

Jeff felt his own trigger fingers tighten without command, and the guns jumped, but Brownie was no longer there.

"Be damned," said Mr. McReuben, "with askin' any fella to perjure himself for me!" He stood up behind the



Jeff said: "I got the word of a dying woman put on me, Lora. Nothing can make me break that word."

fence, small and tight and capable. "Listen," he roared. "This is trespass! We've the legal right to stop anybody comin' on this rancho, and we're going to use it! Go home, you fellas, and leave the Bucksters be!"

Brownie, from the brush, fired again, and his heavy voice roared. "Hire a man and kick him out like a dog! I'm getting you first, McReuben, and then I'm getting Decker. An' then I'm taking the Buckster whelp, and your ranch."

Rebel's gun spoke. "You've forgotten me, you tub of lard! *Yoweee!*" cried Rebel. Then Brownie was gone.

"Nicked him, I think," Rebel said. "This light ain't all I could ask. He's a-cuttin' into the brush on your side, Jefferson. Le'me past yuh."

Jeff said: "Hold the road. I'll get him!" and was gone, slipping into the brush.

Behind him was silence. The nesters were no gunners; they had little taste for what they had to do. Until someone charged, they could be counted on to wait.

But ahead of him and to the side, and all around him, the chaparral was alive with the noise of Brownie. Jeff crept along on his knees, going

under the greasewood and scrub oak and mountain lilac, pressing the sage down with his weight. Clover burrs pricked his hands and brushed against his guns.

Every so often he was still, listening to the noise of Brownie's heavy body. It was hard, almost impossible, to tell just where the gunman was, but it wasn't necessary; always the noise got louder, and that was enough.

And then there was a pinging noise as Brownie caught on barb wire; Jeff got to his feet, crouching a little, and ran forward.

He burst suddenly into a little clearing, a grassy knoll in the middle of the brush. And there, across the clearing, was Brownie, just getting clear of the wire.

The big man wheeled at the noise. He cried: "Who is it? I like to know who I kill."

Jeff said: "Decker, Brownie. You want it now?"

Brownie's gun cracked heavily, and something hit Jeff, and whirled him around, and down into the brush, still turning. Something like a horse kicking, but a horse you couldn't see.

His breath went out in a rush that sounded louder than the gun had

sounded, and his stomach turned over, sickeningly. This was what it was to be killed; this was what those men had felt in Texas. Funny thing, he'd never been scratched before, not ever.

He lay there, and then he knew he wasn't bad hurt; pain came into his side as the air hit the wound, and then he could feel enough, with the shock wearing off, to feel warm blood. Coming out of his right side, where his ribs ended and his belly began.

He tried getting his feet under him, and that made a noise, and Brownie fired again. When Jeff moved, the air came faster and colder against the hole in his side; he shoved his neckcloth down there, and then rolled, and Brownie's bullets followed him through the brush.

Then he crept, and made no noise, and now he was where Brownie didn't expect him, and he got to his feet. Good old feet—they carried him fine! Well, he'd spent a lot of months' pay on boots for them.

There was Brownie, half crouched down, making a small target in the uncertain light, but a target. Only, Brownie wasn't looking at him. Jeff brought the gun up, and he pointed, but he couldn't squeeze the bullet off. Brownie had to see who was giving it to him.

He called: "Hi, Brownie!"

The big man turned, his heavy brows pulling together, frowning. He saw Jeff then and he said: "Hi, boy. Hi, and good-by."

I shouldn't have stayed down in the brush so long, Jeff thought. Gave him time to reload.

The light was going fast; and about sixty feet separated them. Be just luck if anybody hit anybody. Jeff started walking. "Coming at you, Brownie."

Brownie fired. Jeff never even felt the air move; the shot couldn't have been wilder. He held his own trigger.

Brownie said: "You scum! You Texas scum! You're bucking Cunard Brown!" And he fired again.

Fifty feet now. A clump of white sage, shoulder high, was in front of Jeff. He walked right through it, the brittle, juicy stalks breaking off against his thighs and chest; one of them brushed his wound, and it hurt.

He kept on walking, and Brownie yelled, "Take it, then!" and fired twice, fast. One bullet landed in some low-growing buckwheat in front of Jeff, and one went overhead; close enough to make a brittle snapping sound in the air. Close, but still wild, and this was the time.

The hole in Jeff's side was sending out waves of stiffness, spreading. In a few minutes his arm would not be as good as it was now. He brought the gun to bear; he made a brace of his left arm, elbow against his hip,

hand against his right wrist. He squeezed.

When the gun kicked, it hurt worse than when he'd first been shot. He dropped the gun, scrambled for it, and the pain spread all up his side. He had to take the weapon in his left hand. But he kept on walking.

Where Brownie had been, there was nothing. But the big man could be lying in the brush, ready. Jeff walked. He stumbled over rocks and buckwheat and sage clumps; he brushed a yucca, and took a thorn in his calf, just above the boot; but he walked.

And then it was all over; for there was Brownie. And Brownie was not much of anything any more, because he had no throat.

Jeff stood, swaying and looking down at him, and in the distance a coyote howled. Funny how far they could smell blood.

Jeff shuddered, and turned to go back to Mr. McReuben and the boys. And the thing on the ground had been Cunard Brown, who had left the wide-sweeping ocean to try his luck on the land. Jeff walked, and said aloud: "Some gambler!" Some gambler, to try for the Buckster Ranch, with nothing in his hand. "He earned it," Jeff mumbled aloud. "Brownie earned what he got."

The words lacked strength. Jeff reloaded his gun, felt his side. Not bad. He could still fight. But did he want to?

Erect now, he followed the fence line back to the gate. Pecos and Mr. McReuben and Rebel were waiting; silently Jeff knelt next to them.

"You hurt?" Rebel said.

"You find Brownie?" Pecos wanted to know.

"I wish those suckers would come along," Mr. McReuben said.

Jeff took a deep breath, and he felt as if he had gray hair. "I'm just scratched," he said. "Brownie's dead. And those fellows are never coming to fight." He stood up and filled his lungs with air. "You, Harvey," he called. "Harvey Smith! This is Jeff talkin'. Come on along, you and your men, come on through. The road's open; we won't fight!"

Pecos jumped to his feet. "You crazy, Jeff? You outa your head?"

"No, kid. Just grown up. . . . You, Harvey, you know I don't lie to you. Come on through."

Chapter Nineteen

SUNLIGHT danced and glittered on the waters of the Pacific, and it hurt a man's eyes to look at the ocean very long. The light summer fog had burned away without benefit of wind, a short time after dawn. It

was only a few hours since the trouble on the ridge, but it seemed like a new year.

Now a little breeze had come in from the ocean, and the yellowing grasses of the upland pasture, the still-green grass of the bottom lands all moved gently, down and then up again, wave upon quiet wave of air.

It was pretty to look at, and a herd of pure-blood heifers, coming out of a madrone clump into a little patch of curing wild oats, stopped as though to admire the scenery before dropping their white faces to graze.

"Putting on weight," Jeff Decker muttered. "Must have gained a hundred pounds a head in three weeks." Red, unspotted sides were sleek and plump.

He shook his head as though not certain that this was good news, and went into his office to shave. The gold watch on his bureau said eight-fifteen. Well, the meeting was for nine, and he had the day to give to it. He had been up since six, he had ridden Mariposa on the rounds. All cattle had water and feed available. There was nothing more to do. He had ridden the range, but he had not seen Mr. McReuben as yet.

Rebel pulled up at the porch and came in. Jeff, his face lathered, grinned whitely at the old man in the mirror, and went on shaving.

"Now," said Rebel, "there's a sight I like to see. Reminds me of all the trouble I saved myself, growing this crop of timothy."

Jeff took a long stroke under his chin, and then doused the lather off, rubbed his face with a towel. "I've been meaning to ask you, Rebel. What color did they used to be?"

"Red," Rebel said, "with sort of golden highlights in 'em. Right pretty, especially on a breezy day."

"Picturesque," Jeff agreed. "I sure wish I'd seen it."

"One time in Lordsburg," Rebel said, "I had me a man do a hand-colored photograph. But it didn't come out right. He worked and he worked, and finally he ended up drunk in a saloon where the section hands used to drink, swearing there wasn't any such a color."

"My beard came in sort of yellowish red," Jeff said, "the only time I let it grow." He buttoned up his tan flannel shirt, tied a red bandana around his neck. "But I guess it wasn't the same as yours."

"No, mine was different from anything. . . . Jeff, I ain't mad. I'm not trying to start anything. But what did you do it for? Do you know? We're all through now, Jeff. We had those nesters where they should have been."

"Where we could kill them and not go to jail for it?"

"We wasn't gonna kill them," Rebel said. "Just let them know we could kill them."

"Not any of them?"

"Jeff, why you talkin' this way? I just asked. I got a right to know, boy. Mr. McReuben's got a right to know. He ain't slept a wink, Jeff. You tell us the squatters were ruining our water, and then you stop us throwing them out. 'Twas you saw the sign about the road that the rest of us had been lookin' at so long we'd forgotten what it said. And then you threw it away. Stood up and told the nesters to come on through for all of you. Stood up and told them to come down yere this mawnin', an' you'd see all their troubles was ended. Why, Jeff? Mr. McReuben's plumb worried, Jeff. He thinks—"

"He thinks I've sold the Buckster ranch out," Jeff said. "Sure. Do you, Rebel?"

THE old man straightened. "Suh, you are my friend. Ah told Mr. McReuben you had a plan. Ah"—Rebel patted his side—"convinced him."

Jeff grinned. His face felt stiff; maybe he had shaved too close. "Why didn't Mr. McReuben stop me?"

Rebel said: "Ask him. Yon deh he sits on his hoss."

Jeff picked up his Texas hat and walked out onto the porch. Mr. McReuben sat the high sorrel quietly, like a small statue. "Ready to go?"

"I hear I've been worrying you," Jeff said.

"Get Mariposa," Mr. McReuben said. "It's time to go."

Jeff shrugged and went to get his mare. When he rode her around the corner, Rebel was already up on his jumping black, but the old Confederate was riding a little behind Mr. McReuben, his right hand high, covering over his gun.

Jeff fell in alongside the segundo, making Mariposa dance. "If I've been worrying you so," Jeff said, "why didn't you stop me, up there at the ridge?"

Mr. McReuben turned an expressionless face toward him. "You said it once before," he said. "The time you wouldn't fight Brownie. A ranch, you said, was more than a piece of land, more than the people who owned it or the people who worked on it. Two of the bosses on that ranch couldn't fight without putting a hole in the ranch. . . . You said it to the squatters, you told them to go on through, and I couldn't do anything but back you. I put you in your job, and by God, I am for you till I have to fire you. Or kill you."

Rebel cut his black alongside. But his hand was still unmistakably ready for gunplay.

"Jeff, tell us. What made you do it? You got a plan, ain't you?"

Mr. McReuben showed the first signs of irritation Jeff had ever seen him betray. "Stop getting so Southern, Rebel. You're almost over the line into Mexico."

"Stop it," Jeff said. "All of us stop it. We've got a job to do, a ranch to run, and we're breaking up, squabbling like kids."

"You giving me orders?"

"No, Mr. McReuben. I'm just talking. I owe you all, I owe the Buckster Ranch an explanation. I won't say an apology, but an explanation. I killed Brownie, didn't I?"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Reuben.

Jeff rubbed his hand over his mouth. "When you kill a man, that's the end. It doesn't matter how bad he needed killing, it's still the end. Nothing you can do after that's going to make it all right for that man."

"Well, Lawd, Jeff," Rebel said, "I been sayin' all along for you to leave the guns to me. That's my business."

"I know. It used to be my business. I retired. An' you know when I quit? When it got so I liked to kill. When every time I looked at a man I felt like an undertaker measuring him for his coffin. It hasn't anything to do with being scared, has it? It's being afraid of yourself."

Neither of the other men answered.

"Why haven't you ever gone back to Virginia, Rebel?"

Rebel spat, and grinned, and was himself for a minute. "They was a small matter of a jedge I didn't like in '66."

Jeff said: "No. That isn't the reason, and you know it. A carpet-bagging judge forty years ago? You've never gone back because you've changed. Because you don't want your family and your family's friends to see what being a gunman in the West did to you."

The horses clinked slowly over the hard ground. Rebel rode with his head down, watching Shenandoah's muscles play under the shiny black skin. "By God, Jeff, there aren't many men I'd take that from."

"All right," Mr. McReuben said. "It's the truth. It's the truth that Rebel and I knew all along, though we didn't know about you. We never wanted to use guns if there were any other way. But you're a man, Jeff. Having started with the gun, you owed it to the Buckster Ranch to go on. Or to back off and let Rebel and me finish for you."

"It's not me. It's what I, what all of us promised Mrs. Buckster."

The little segundo was a lance in the saddle. "I'm startled to hear you speak that name, Decker."

"Easy," Jeff said. "What did we promise her? To take care of her

ranch, to turn it over to her grandson when he was twenty-one. The best we could, being human, being mortal."

"Go on," Mr. McReuben said. "And make it good."

"We could have got rid of the nesters," Jeff said. "Sure. I had fixed that. Me and a lawyer. And maybe we could have got out of the mortgages."

"We could have."

"It isn't so because we say it's so, no matter how many guns we have to back it up with," Jeff said. He pulled in his horse. "There's the gate and on the other side are the people waiting for this powwow, and let's wait a minute. When we finish, either I ride to the nearest railroad station, or I talk for all of us."

"Talk now," Mr. McReuben said.

"I think we could have pulled out from under the mortgages. And then what was next? Fighting the highway commission on the road. And then maybe some day they will want to put a railroad through. And we'd have the railroad to fight. And so on."

"We were men enough for it. Rebel and I—even Brownie."

"Yes. And in 1913, when Pecos is twenty-one, what would you have to turn over to him? A piece of land, a bunch of cattle, and a State-full of enemies. Life's going on, Mr. McReuben, this country's grown up. The big, fighting ranch is gone. You can't run cattle on farmland any more than you can farm cattle land."

"Go on," Mr. McReuben said. "What do you propose?"

"When I saw Brownie lying there, I knew I'd grown up too. I never killed a much worse man. And even that killing was too much for me. I—just a little while ago I was a cowhand, rassling a bull in the corral dust. Mrs. Buckster took me out of that corral—yes, you helped—and made me something. Made me finally, into a trustee of her estate."

"And—"

"She made me grow up; too. I wasn't going to, I'm not going to, repay her by leaving her grandson where he'd sooner or later have to get to the point where I have been so many times, where I was, standing over a man with a hot gun in my hand."

ALL three were silent. Finally Rebel said: "I seen it coming. I was one of the first in the Wild West, and I'm one of the last. And I don't know what I'd do if I had my life to live over. But that boy up ahead there, Jeff, that Pecos waiting with his lawyer for us, means more to me than maybe the son I never had. You know that, Mr. McReuben, now. By God, you know that!"

"I know it, Rebel."

"And I think Jeff's right. I think Jeff ought to go on for us."

The little man said: "I'm tired. Somehow I'm tired. Sure, Jeff's right. But—go on to the parley, Jeff. Talk for the Buckster Ranch. Tell the lawyer I vote with you on everything."

"Well," Jeff said, "my plan is—"

"Is fine. Sure. Your plans are always fine, and up to date and—well, carry them out. I got a ranch to see to." The sorrel horse whirled and was gone back up the trail, and Jeff slowly got off Mariposa and opened the gate.

"Rebel," he said as he swung it wide, "it hurts like hell to grow up."

Chapter Twenty

THE parley went easily. There was no fight left in the pre-emptors. They had been starved for a week, cut off from grocery stores and the world for a week, and in that time they had seen what they were up against; they had given of their small supply of money to a lawyer, only to have the lawyer tell them he couldn't get them a road out of their ranches for two years, maybe more. They had given their money and support to a gunman, and Jeff had killed the gunman, and gotten the Sheriff's blessing for it.

They had been brought down to the 'dobe soil and had their noses rubbed in it, and now the enemy, surprisingly, had turned into a friend, and it was all too fast for them. They signed the papers Mr. Garrison had prepared, and they acted like men, dazed, not sure yet that their good luck was true.

The agreements were simple. Each man was to have forty acres of bottom land along the new highway. He would take title to it on the day he finished claiming on his hundred and sixty and turned it over to the trustees for the Buckster Ranch.

They signed, one by one, Mr. Lonan, Harvey Smith, the boy Al, and the heads of the other seventeen families. The land agent signed to give his approval—Mr. Garrison had worked out the Government end of it, and that was too complicated for a cowhand like Jeff—and Lora and the Sheriff signed as witnesses.

And finally the nesters went up the trail in a body, quietly, not talking much, and it was all over.

Harvey Smith said, "Coming, Lora?" and when she shook her head he nodded his understanding, and followed his friends up the trail.

Jeff watched him go, and said to Mr. Garrison: "They can make a living on forty acres of good farmland. And with the plowing going at the bottom of our contour instead of the top, the Buckster Ranch can make a living too."

"With what the State is going to give us in cash for the highway right of way, the Buckster Ranch doesn't have to make much of a living," Mr. Garrison said.

"Will that pay off the mortgage?"

"Sure. And I think we ought to put the strip on the ocean side of the highway on the market as beach sites. If we can't get a thousand dollars for a five-acre beach site, I don't know my real estate. It's a good deal, Jeff, for the boy and the ranch, and us. You've added five sections of deeded land to the ranch and all you've lost is access to salt water."

Lora had said nothing all through the parley. Jeff watched her as he said: "Save a mile of beach for Buckster use."

Mr. Garrison said: "Sure."

"Make it the part that has that little cove in it. The point that's covered with scrub oak."

"I don't think I know it," the lawyer said.

"Well," Jeff told him, "I'll mark it on the map for you, but it's easy to know; there's a suit of my spring underwear hanging on a bush right smack in the middle of it." Out of the corner of his eye he saw the girl smile and he knew it was going to be all right.

He said: "Miss Harriott, the Buckster Ranch invites you to dinner."

The girl nodded, and walked to her horse. And then they were all riding toward the big house, Jeff and Lora, Mr. Garrison and the land agent, Pecos and Rebel.

The horses clumped along, and nobody talked much, and it was not hard to know what they were all thinking. The Buckster Ranch was going on, and it was going to be a better, even a bigger, cattle ranch than ever; it wasn't going to be the same.

It had been a lovely remote world of its own, and now the bigger world was coming in, the highway was going through where once only those with the Buckster brand could ride; twenty-two miles of barbed wire was going to mark a boundary that once had used the great Pacific Ocean for a fence.

A great woman had built her kingdom by the sea, and it had lasted her time, but only barely; she would have hated what Jeff had done, but there had been no choice; for time stands still for no man.

They turned their horses over to a Mexican and went into the house, and Mr. Garrison told Pedro to bring a bottle of wine. The lawyer said finally: "I don't like giving orders in this house; where's Mr. McReuben?"

Pedro came back in answer to their ring; on the tray with the wine bottle and glasses was a letter for Jeff.

He said: "I'll read it now, and then maybe we can smile again."

Slowly he read aloud:

Dear Jeff:

You're right, I'm wrong, and what you have done is all there was to do. We never could have explained to Mrs. Buckster why we did it, but it was necessary.

I'm pulling out. You and Garrison will have to name a third executor; I hereby resign.

There is trouble or the rumor of trouble in the Columbian Republic, and I think I'll go there first.

You are *segundo* now.

Charles McReuben

Jeff said quietly: "Will you pour, Lora? I don't have to give you all the name of the man we're drinking to."

They drank and their glasses clinked dully as they put them back on the tray, and Rebel suddenly cried: "I'm goin' after him. He had no right to leave me."

Jeff said: "No. You have to stay, Rebel, and you know it. You have to stay and make Pecos do his lessons; Lora's not big enough to handle him by herself."

Lora said: "I?"

Jeff said: "Sure. You think you're gonna play the grand lady, live on this ranch in ease, just because you're my wife? Lady, you have to work like the rest of us. This boy Pecos is plumb ignorant, I'm going to want you to tutor him three or four hours a day."

LORA gasped, and turned crimson, and Mr. Garrison took the land agent by the arm. He was shaking with suppressed laughter. "Something I want to show you," the lawyer said, and they left Jeff and Lora, Rebel and Pecos alone.

Pecos said: "I'm gonna go after Mr. McReuben. I ain't a-gonna study with no woman."

"Any woman," Rebel said, automatically.

"I ain't—" They had forgotten that Pecos wore a gun. He grabbed it out of its holster, and Rebel knocked it out of his hand.

"For that," Rebel said, "I'm goin' to hev to punish you, son. That's discourtesy to a lady. Time yo' learned some mannehs."

The old gentleman bowed to Lora, and grabbed Pecos firmly by the arm. He led him out.

And then Jeff and Lora were alone, in the library of the ranch he ran, and there was no sound any place but the wailing of a wild young boy, crying for a wild life that he would never know again.

Lora shut the door, and the sound was gone, too, as she raised her arms and walked toward Jeff.

Who's Who *in this* Issue



Arthur Gordon

I WAS born in Savannah thirty-eight years ago, and had a rather overpowering education at St. Paul's School in New Hampshire, then four years at Yale, then two at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. At least it would have been overpowering if I'd studied much, but I don't think I did. I played a lot of games violently, and stroked the Balliol crew at Oxford for two years, and wrote the first short story I ever sold. . . . Some desperate pulp editor bought it.

In 1936 I came home, worked briefly for Time, Inc., got fired, got a job as "reader" on *Good Housekeeping*, where I read unsolicited poems at the rate of about one hundred thousand a year and began to write a few magazine stories and articles in my spare time. When the war came along I was Managing Editor of *Good Housekeeping*.

For some mysterious reason the Air Corps wouldn't take me until I was thirty years old, so I didn't get into uniform until August, 1942. But by November I was in England, assigned temporarily to the RAF, and I was overseas off and on for the next three years. I came out in 1945, a major.

I free-lanced for a few months. Then I was offered the editorship of *Cosmopolitan*, a job which lasted just short of

three years and was too demanding to permit any writing on the side.

My first novel, "Reprisal," a Literary Guild selection for August, was published in 1950.

I play a lot of tennis, ride some, and go hunting when I can. Seems to me I spend most of the rest of my time staring at a typewriter.

Theodore Goodridge Roberts

HE was born in a Canadian rectory so many years ago that he feels self-conscious, even apologetic, about the date. The spirit of that home was at once merry and bookish. There was an eighteen-year spread between the eldest and youngest of the children; and as all five of them progressively felt and fell for the divine afflatus, the youngest, yclept Theodore, was rhyming industriously before he could write. With the alphabet mastered, he laid siege to the magazines. The *Independent*, of New York, bought a set of his verses before he was fifteen. *Century* soon followed, and many lesser publications; and for a time it seemed to the young poet that verses were as easily disposed of as produced. He turned to prose fiction and sold a short story about Indians and Acadians, and a short "Zenda-ish" novelette. Then he was all set—upset, rather—for life.

From August, 1914, to early in 1919, his literary output was pinched to a mere occasional drip; but after the consigning of the King's jacket to the mothballs, it came on again and re-

mained in full spate for decades. And now what's to show? "The Red Feathers" was once called a juvenile classic—but what and where is it now? "The Wasp," "Toll of the Tides," "Forest Fugitives" and other romantic tales, had their readers on both sides of the Atlantic, but will now be found only in dusty bins, if anywhere. Some of his verses, however, scattered from time to time in anthologies and textbooks, enjoy a kinder fate. Dr. Henry Van Dyke used "The Maid" in "Little Masterpieces" for years, and Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations" quotes from "An Epitaph."

And *Sir Dinadan* is still in the saddle.



Above: Yukihiro Suzuki, the author of "The Autobiography of a Kamikaze Pilot," beginning on page 92.



At left: Farewell banquet of a Kamikaze group before departure on their suicidal missions.

BLUE BOOK

Magazine of Adventure in Fact and Fiction ★ December, 1951

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

★ December, 1951



NIGHT INTRUDER

A report from Korea by our combat artist—
Hamilton Greene

THE OUTLAW, by Wyatt Blassingame; TOMORROW WILL COME by Edward McKenna; MANHATTAN INTERLUDE by Arthur Gordon; JOHN ROBINSON RIDES FOUR by Robert B. Johnson; THE MYSTERY OF COSSACK RIVER by William Byron Mowery.